



DREAM ON...READ ON...
FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

FAIRY TALES

A GUIDE

for teachers and childcare professionals,
reflecting the pedagogical experience and psycho-social
approach practiced in three European states
(Bulgaria, Greece and Italy)



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Citizenship Programme of the European Union (2014-2020)

**PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL ASPECTS
OF INTRODUCING THE TOPIC
OF GENDER EQUALITY
INTO THE TEACHING PRACTICES
AT KINDERGARTEN AND PRIMARY SCHOOL**

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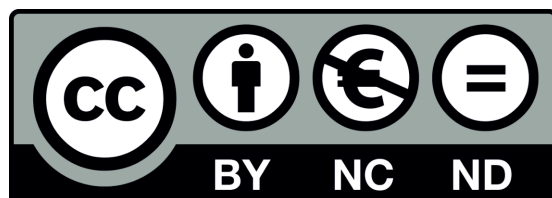
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INTRODUCTION

This Guide is meant to support teachers and other professionals in their work with children at preschool and primary school age. It provides theoretical and practical guidance for introducing the topic of gender equality into the education of children aged 5 to 7, by using classic children's tales. It reflects the pedagogical experience and the psycho-social approach in delivering training modules at kindergartens and primary schools in three EU member states: Bulgaria, Italy and Greece.

This publication features two main parts. Part One presents the conceptual framework, with key theoretical contributions in support of efficient professional interventions and it was developed by NAIA experts, representing this project's lead organization. It compiles information on a number of essential topics: among them gender equality; gender stereotypes; gender-based violence and discrimination; and human rights. In addition, it provides an outline of the important stages in early childhood development regarding children's understanding of gender roles' implications for both family and social life. Further, Part One throws light on the influence of classic fairy tales on shaping children's values and attitudes. Special attention is paid to the supportive environment for children - parents, relatives, teachers, other adults important to them and their crucial role in encouraging children's critical thinking towards gender stereotypes in society. The theoretical contributions of Part One may be familiar to some educators and professionals who work with young children, but their inclusion puts into perspective the way classic children's tales relate to the topic of gender equality and outline the conceptual framework of the proposed practical tools.

Part Two focuses on the implementation of the training module activities in the three countries: Bulgaria, Italy and Greece. It was developed by experts representing the three organizations participating in the project - *Association NAIA* in Bulgaria; the *Women's Center of Karditsa* in Greece and *Defence for Children International* in Italy. An overview of three national contexts in the three countries and the policies that promote gender equality is provided. This part also features an outline of the way the modules were adapted methodologically to reflect as much as possible the established pedagogical practices in the different educational systems. The expert conclusions and recommendations provide guidelines for continuing and developing the project-based work towards lasting and sustainable presence of gender equality in the education of children at an early age.

Presenting country-specific experience within the project framework provides different perspectives and approaches and may serve as a basis for launching context-based pilot activities in other countries as well. It is meant to support teachers and professionals working with pre-school and primary school children, allowing them to use a flexible and easy-to-adapt set of tools in order to explore the complex and sensitive issues linked to gender equality and child development.



THE PROJECT

SUMMARY

The Fairy Tales Project has been implemented in three countries - Bulgaria, Greece and Italy - with the financial support of the *Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme* of the European Union (2014-2020). The main objective is to prevent gender-based violence by challenging gender stereotypes about women and men at an early age. This project focuses on the problem of imposing of socially acceptable images and roles ("gender order in society"), restricting young boys and girls to freely express themselves. These stereotypes are adopted and integrated during the process of socialization of children, and continue to play a part in their lives as adults and this could account for imbalances between women and men in different spheres of economic and social life, discrimination and violence against women.

This project has been implemented at kindergartens and schools with the idea to introduce the topic of gender equality among children aged 5-7, as well as among their parents and teachers.

An experimental feature of the project is the use of classic children's tales to introduce the topic of gender equality in the education of children at preschool and primary school age. A methodology was developed to provide a new perspective to some of the most popular and favorite fairy tales stories for children. Fairy tales are used as a tool to promote healthy and fair relationships between girls and boys at an early age.

Both the methodology and the tools are meant to be flexible and adaptive. They were adopted by different national contexts, with specific variables regarding the educational systems and pedagogical practices in the three participating countries - Bulgaria, Italy and Greece. This added value helps to share experience and expertise at European Union level and to replicate good practices in other countries.

OBJECTIVES

This project's efforts are towards early prevention of gender-based violence, and gender equality by educating children at an early age in a spirit of mutual respect and esteem.

ITS OBJECTIVES ARE:

- To raise awareness of gender stereotypes, linked to encouraging or justifying violence, among professionals and parents as they represent two key child care agents who significantly impact the shaping of children's ideas and values.
- To increase children's critical thinking abilities to help them challenge social norms leading to gender inequality. Encourage girls and boys at an early age to build healthy relationships based on mutual respect and esteem.
- To increase the capacity of professionals to introduce the topic of gender equality (social roles, stereotypes, violence in all its forms, human rights) in their work with children aged 5 to 7 years by using classic children's tales.
- To develop methodological guidelines and practical tools for introducing the topic of gender equality in the work with children of preschool and primary school age, which may be further used by professionals in other regions and EU countries.

TARGET GROUPS

About 250 children aged 5 to 7 participated in this project in Bulgaria, Italy and Greece. In this age group, children typically begin to form their own values and attitudes, including learning about behaviors that are considered appropriate for girls and boys respectively. The education system is a

key factor in this process, as is the family. The availability of curricula and training materials on issues such as equality between women and men, non-stereotyped gender roles, mutual respect, non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships, gender-based violence against women and the right to personal integrity, opens up space for early of gender-based violence prevention¹. The end-result may be strengthening children's thoughtfulness and critical attitude to all forms of violence in their life as adults.

One of the target groups under this project consists of 180 kindergartens teachers, preschool and primary school teachers, sports coaches, teachers engaged in extracurricular activities in the three countries. They have been chosen because they are actively engaged in the education and upbringing of preschool and primary school students. Raising their awareness and skills will help bring about positive change.

Another target group features 300 parents, having children at preschool and primary school age. They have been involved in the process because they are agents of primary importance in their children's socialization, by shaping through their authority and otherwise their attitudes and the way they perceive the world around them. Parents' role is indispensable. They could encourage children to think critically and challenge social norms, resulting in violence or they could restrict them. Without their involvement and support in this delicate process, changing the perspective can become quite difficult.

The involvement of both parents and teachers allows for reaching out to two key social systems, having the strongest influence on the shaping of children's ideas and value system. It can be assumed that the more sensitive and aware these two target groups are, the more effective they would be in supporting children to build healthy relationships.

EXPECTED RESULTS

The project results contribute to promoting common EU values like pluralism, nondiscrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and gender equality across the Union.

PROJECT RESULTS IN PARTICULAR:

- Improved understanding of classic tales' messages regarding the role and place of women and men in society and their influence on shaping children's values.
- Improved understanding of why it is important to work on gender equality with children at this age.
- Developed skills for communicating in a meaningful way, building strong relationships and overcoming violence in relationships with other girls and boys at primary and preschool age.
- Parents prepared to support their children in building healthy and safe relationships, based on respect for the other person.
- Increased knowledge and skills of teachers to work on the topic of gender equality in early childhood.
- Drafted innovative methodology and tools for teaching children aged 5-7 years on the topic of gender equality through classic children's tales.
- Shared experience and expertise at international level for the introduction of the topic of gender equality in preschool and primary school education of children.

¹ Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence - Article 14, paragraph. 1



PART ONE: COMMON CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK I. GENDER EQUALITY

1. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR MEN AND WOMEN TO HAVE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES?

The topic of gender equality is insufficiently present in modern public perception. There are several reasons. First, it seems too complex to find its proper expression in the areas of social, economic and political life. It is difficult to grasp in full its importance for the successful development of societies. In addition, the topic is somewhat sensitive and conflicting for many societies, sharing conservative patriarchal features. It is easy to be distorted: its focus may get easily shifted in conservative environments, often hosting fears of changing established power relations, and with the excuse that gender equality leads to anomalies; it may become mistakenly linked to the sexual orientation of youngsters; it may end up being interpreted as a clash of genders, where women desire to take over and control men socially and within their families; it is often seen as a threat to traditional values of family and children, with the end result being the breakdown of family life and failure to raise children. Therefore, we will do our best to present our perspective to gender equality and explain why we consider it important to promote it.

Gender equality implies equal rights for women and men, girls and boys, as well as equal access to rights, resources, opportunities and protection. It would be a mistake to interpret it as the effort to make women and men equal in their behavior, needs, skills and aspirations. Equality is achieved when, based on specific needs, both genders get a chance to realize their full potential and rights without anyone being privileged or harmed.

The different treatment of women and men, resulting from gender stereotypes, affect all stages of our development in life. In early childhood, they are linked to different attitudes of adults towards children, depending on whether they are girls or boys. Boys, for example, are encouraged to be messy and violent, and girls are encouraged to be polite, caring and creative. Gender stereotypes in adolescence translate into differences regarding access to education, health

care, entertainment, unevenly shared household responsibilities between girls and boys. In adulthood, gender inequality is expressed in different opportunities for work and professional realization, for receiving fair pay, access to resources, participation in decision-making. At retirement age, the differences are in access to care, attention and medical services.

When we think about gender equality, we may refer to a valid European instrument measuring achievements and challenges in this area across EU member states. The Gender Equality Index, launched by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)², is an objective statistical tool measuring this complex concept through a set of socio-economic and political indicators in each country: labor market, remuneration, access to education and health care, participation in decision-making, discrimination and violence. Analyzing these areas provides a solid basis for drafting policies and legislation to ensure equal opportunities for women and men and put them into practice.

Gender equality will benefit society at large, including all areas of social, economic and political life, by:

- promoting economic, socially sustainable and equitable development;
- reducing discrimination and violence against women;
- encouraging the expression of personal potential and interests, without the pressure of public expectations about acceptable social behavior (or social stigmatizing).

² <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020>

GENDER STEREOTYPES

Since birth, people have certain physical characteristics that are gender specific. Growing up, however, they learn how to behave as girls and boys when coming into contact with the world around. It is important to note that this identity is not constant, but is shaped by experience, social relations, and the wider context. This is the so-called process of socialization, which continues throughout life: each person acquires and maintains attitudes and patterns of behavior that allow him to become a valuable part of society, and that bring approval and recognition. Personal concepts, qualities, views, means of expression, habits, preferences, moral boundaries, lifestyle choices, they all belong here.

The Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence)³, as a key document in international legislation to address gender-based violence, defines *gender* as “the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men”. These are social attributes and opportunities associated with being female and male and to the relationships between women and men, and girls and boys.”

Every child learns how to behave as a girl or as a boy in and outside the family, while enjoying books and movies, when drawing, playing, or listening to stories. At an early age, children are confronted with different expectations, coming from their parents, loved ones, community and the wider environment. These expectations reflect prevailing views and do not always have rational explanations. It seems as if someone has written the rules for the world to exist, and everyone is supposed to live by them. These are stereotypical beliefs, characteristic of a certain group and performing several cognitive functions. They:

- systematize and simplify reality. When we do not consider the characteristics of each single individual, but assign him to a broad group instead, we can more easily

place a large number of people in a general category. This allows us to simplify the world mentally and make it more predictable and easier to understand.

- protect values. Groups allow us to attribute common characteristics to all their members. When we do this, it is easier for us to "understand" them and compare ourselves to them.
- maintain social control. It is easier to create social norms that regulate the behavior of many people in a group than to control each person individually.

Although they feel like "empty talk", not based on facts, stereotypes are very real in their consequences.

In early childhood, gender stereotypes for girls and boys are linked to the choice of toys, of wearing clothes in a certain color, assigning different tasks, and of imposing different restrictions. Some of the most popular examples are the following:

- o Only girls play with dolls.
- o Only boys play with cars and trucks.
- o Boys don't cry.
- o Girls are emotionally unstable and more emotional than boys.
- o Girls are gentler and more sensitive than boys.
- o Boys are naughtier than girls.
- o Boys are better at maths than girls are.
- o Girls are better at reading and writing than boys are.
- o Girls should help their mothers with household chores.
- o Boys have to follow in their fathers' footsteps and there's no place for them in the kitchen.

³ <https://www.coe.int/fr/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168008482e>

Girls and boys, women and men have innate talents and abilities, and stereotypes can arrest their personal development, as well as their education and career development, and life opportunities in general.

Gender stereotypes⁴ are inherently linked to hierarchy, privileges, and empowerment. They are simplified generalizations about the characteristics, behavior, roles of women and men in society, applied individually to women and men to characterize them in a particular situation. This direct application of often erroneous generalizations to a specific situation results in shame, stigmatization, restriction, unfair treatment and restriction of rights and opportunities. While written law raises gender equality to a mandatory norm of the highest rank, often in real life there are other unwritten, but persistent rules, norms, ideas, and experience, affirming the traditionally established gender hierarchy, where men are entitled to more advantages, power and opportunities, receive more favorable conditions and attitudes, and have more control over various choices, decisions and attitudes. There are deep-rooted beliefs, ideas and attitudes about the different value of women and men, about their qualities, talents and abilities and they are constantly practiced. They lack objective, scientifically recognized basis and justification, yet they shape essential differences in the attitude towards women and men. Many of these stereotypes are based on the idea of confrontation, and exclusion (if certain traits, activities, positions, roles, characteristics are considered to be inherent to one gender, then the opposite set is assumed to be characteristic of the other gender, without any proof for underlying biological conditioning). The gender stereotyping of men and women has a profound impact on our society. Due to the advances made in recent years to establish equality between the sexes, society reflects fewer attitudes that support discrimination and inequality between men and women. However, even though we are liberated in our beliefs and attitudes, many of our actions are still influenced by gender stereotyping and misconceptions about men and women that have been passed down from one generation to another. In spite of their stated

values, a surprising number of people today relate to each other following gender stereotypes. We adopt biased attitudes at an early age from observing the stereotypical roles that people in our families play. As we progress through school, these attitudes are reinforced by our classmates and peers. They are also supported by the unspoken biases of our teachers and by the arrangement of educational programs. The media is guilty of exploiting differences between men and women and exaggerating gender stereotypes to sell products. The residuals of these prejudices in our lives today portray men as masterful, powerful, paternalistic and uncommunicative, and women as emotionally responsive and communicative, yet childlike, helpless and incompetent. These distortions of are divisive, and interfere with our being intimate and loving in our close relationships. The social pressure exerted by these attitudes is as damaging to couple relationships as racial prejudice is to relations between people of different ethnic backgrounds. Each gender stereotype confuses people's thinking about the differences between men and women. These timeworn attitudes overstate the qualities that distinguish men and women, and place them in artificial categories. Some gender stereotypes that pit men and women against each other include:

- Men are tough and powerful, not helpless and childish like women.
- Women are sensitive and intuitive, not unfeeling and insensitive like men.
- Men are logical, sensible and rational, not scatterbrained, unstable and irrational like women.
- Women easily form deep emotional attachments, they aren't afraid to commit in a relationship and form an attachment as men are.
- Men are primarily interested in their careers or vocations; these are not secondary interests as they are with women.
- Women are primarily interested in a long term relationship and parenthood; these

⁴ Developed by Genoveva Tasheva, Manager of the Bulgarian Centre for Gender Studies.

are not secondary interests as they are with men.

In fact, there are many more significant things that men and women share in common than divide us. Some truths about both men and women are:

- Most men and women are feelingful and emotionally expressive. Most also struggle with their defenses against feeling.
- Most women and men are interested in business, finance, scientific ideas, mechanical matters, politics and abstract ideas.

- Most men and women are interested in domestic activities such as design, cooking, childrearing and fashion.
- Most women and men find satisfaction in having a career or vocation.
- Most men and women have a strong desire for a lasting affiliation with the opposite sex.
- Most women and men have a strong interest in procreation and parenthood.
- Most men and women have a very strong desire to be in love with each other.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION

Gender inequality is a barrier for women and men to freely express their full potential and to realize themselves fully. However, it does not affect both genders equally. In the spheres of economic and social development, inequality harms women to a greater extent, because it prevents them from developing their potential, from being successful in society, from having resources, from participating in decision-making. As a result, there is a greater risk of women and young girls falling into poverty, social exclusion, discrimination and violence. The imbalance in opportunities for worldwide impact puts women at a disadvantage and limits them in achieving stability and prosperity.

Gender-based violence⁵ is a phenomenon deeply rooted in gender inequality, and continues to be one of the most notable human rights violations within all societies. Gender-based violence is violence directed against a person because of their gender. Both women and men experience gender-based violence but the majority of victims are women and girls.

Gender-based violence and violence against women are terms that are often used interchangeably as it has been widely acknowledged that most gender-based violence is inflicted on women and girls, by men. However, using the 'gender-based' aspect is important as it

highlights the fact that many forms of violence against women are rooted in power inequalities between women and men.

The Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe, Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence), frames gender-based violence and violence against women as a gendered act which is “a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women”. Under the Istanbul Convention acts of gender-based violence are emphasised as resulting in “physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”

It is also important to recognise that gender-based violence may be normalised and reproduced due to structural inequalities, such as social norms, attitudes and stereotypes around gender generally and violence against women specifically. Therefore it is important to acknowledge structural or institutional violence, which can be defined as the subordination of women in economic, social and political life, when attempting to explain the prevalence of violence against women within our societies.

Discrimination and unequal treatment of girls and boys come in many shapes and forms. They

⁵ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/what-is-gender-based-violence>

start in the family, with girls being brought up from an early age to do household chores in order to take care of their families in the future, and boys being taught to acquire income generating skills and achieve social status. In many families, boys are not encouraged to go into the kitchen or help with household chores, while for girls it is perfectly acceptable and even desirable to spend their free time helping their mothers by caring for their younger siblings or for the elderly. All this shows that even within the family, children may have different opportunities, privileges and limitations.

The larger social circle outside the family home, with its formal institutions and informal groups, further contributes to spreading and strengthening stereotypes about women and men. This generates harmful practices of unequal treatment, discrimination and violence. They can be found at different levels, but in all cases lead to uneven ownership and control of resources and hence to dependence and violence. Women are more affected by these inequalities and this can lead to living lives controlled by family and partners, being deprived of their right to an opinion, and exposed to physical and emotional abuse, deprivation, restriction of liberty and the right to personal choice, sexual violence.

The gravity of the problem requires political and legislative solutions. The Istanbul Convention provides very important guidelines for individual countries in this direction. Article 4 „Fundamental rights, equality and non-discrimination”, item 2 says: „Parties condemn all forms of discrimination against women and take, without delay, the necessary legislative and other measures to prevent it, in particular by:

- embodying in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation the principle of equality between women and men and ensuring the practical realisation of this principle;
- prohibiting discrimination against women, including through the use of sanctions, where appropriate;
- abolishing laws and practices which discriminate against women.”

Article 6 „Gender-sensitive policies” points out that “Parties shall undertake to include a gender perspective in the implementation and evaluation of the impact of the provisions of this Convention and to promote and effectively implement policies of equality between women and men and the empowerment of women.”

Special attention is paid to the education of children, since it has a strong impact on the way they perceive themselves and their peers and predetermines their behavior in their future lives as adults. That is why the Istanbul Convention seeks to encourage the adoption of certain values in the field of education such as gender equality, mutual respect and non-violence in interpersonal relationships, non-stereotypical gender roles, the right to privacy, awareness of gender-based violence and the need to counter it (Article 14). The founders of the Convention see this as an important aspect of the prevention of violence against women, as much of the attitudes, beliefs and behavioral patterns of children are shaped during their education.

Women and men have the same needs to live with dignity and to achieve economic and social progress. However, there are more barriers for women to do this - cultural and social practices that limit their development; overt or covert discrimination; manifestations of various forms of violence. Therefore, additional efforts and measures are needed to compensate for most of the restrictions that women face in order to participate equally in all spheres of the socio-economic and political life.

2. WHY IS GENDER EQUALITY WORK IMPORTANT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD?

OVERCOMING STEREOTYPES

As young children develop, they begin to explore the meanings of being a boy or a girl. They learn about their roles by browsing the world around them. Communication with parents, relatives, peers, teachers, games and fairy tales help children define themselves and the others, using different criteria; they begin to understand what is to be a girl or a boy. They start choosing certain toys based on what they think is appropriate for boys or girls. They also start defining what is considered appropriate for girls or boys only.

The ability to recognize similarities and differences is an important skill that children develop from an early age with the help of adults. They constantly ask questions in an effort to put in order the world around them, to find differences and similarities, as well as connections between different objects. From an early age, they begin to think that being a boy is about doing certain things and having certain likes and dislikes, different from the things done by girls, liked and disliked by them. However, these are not innate. They are lessons taught by adults, and based on their understanding, experience, behaviors, social relationships. Children grow up surrounded by examples of what boys and girls do – family relationships, games they play, fairy tales and movies.

When toddlers choose toys to play with or wear clothes of a certain colour, they do it because they like it. Young children do not make conscious choices based on their understanding that certain toys or clothes are considered suitable for girls or boys only. Yet their choices are not spontaneous, but influenced by the explicit or hidden messages of important adult figures around them. Adults are supposed to help children navigate the world, to understand what the expectations towards them are and what they need to do to be accepted into this world, not isolated and/or rejected.

Little girls and boys learn⁶ how to behave going through several important stages:

- Early childhood: children observe the behavior and activities of adults around them.

Much of parents' communication with their infants is influenced by gender and based on stereotypical expectations and socially acceptable patterns for girls and boys. In its turn, this shapes and models the infant's ideas. Eighteen-month-old children develop the ability to identify themselves using a set of features, using various sources of information in this process. While developing their sense of self, they tend to follow models available inside their families and at kindergartens. At this stage their sense of belonging to a certain group takes shape: it is the girls' or the boys' group.

- Three-to-four-year-olds: children focus on differences and connect the concepts of „a girl“ and „a boy“ with some of their characteristics. At this age rules and expectations of how a girl and a boy should look and behave start shaping, including the choice of toys: an adult is supposed to buy a doll for the girl and a car for the boy. Certain emotions become acceptable and others don't (e.g. "Don't cry, you're a boy!"). Boys are encouraged to be independent and girls to be obedient.

- Five-to-seven-year-olds: most children are already aware that there are rules for girls and boys and that they should follow them. They still do not have enough knowledge and experience to think about the beliefs and values on which these rules are based. Researchers describe this period as the strictest: children have no explanation for many of the norms, yet they understand what is socially acceptable behavior and how different it might be for girls and boys, how ridiculed and isolated they may feel when they fail to follow them.

While the norms of behavior for girls and boys tend to become less strict and undergo certain changes in the following stages, some of them remain for life. They influence communication, building relationships and partnerships,

⁶ <https://depts.washington.edu/dbpeds/healthy-gender-development.pdf>

parenting. This is why efforts to raise children in a spirit of tolerance, respect and esteem for others, acceptance of girls and boys as equally valuable, equally coping and successful should start early on.

These efforts should help children develop an understanding that everyone is equally valuable and meaningful in their interests, abilities and aspirations. At first, it may seem difficult to translate it to the ideas of a 5-year-old, but in fact we can help children develop their understanding of categories “not just girlish or boyish” such as:

- ✓ toys are just toys and both girls and boys can have fun playing with them;
- ✓ boys and girls can be good at sports,

writing, drawing, dancing;

- ✓ girls and boys can be friends;
- ✓ running games are for everyone;
- ✓ girls and boys can wear whatever clothes they like at our kindergarten / at our school;
- ✓ colors are just colors. There are no girlish and boyish colors. All children like different colors⁷.

It is very important to work with children in order to develop their critical thinking, but it is equally important to work with the adults around them, in a parallel effort.

HUMAN RIGHTS, WOMEN'S RIGHTS, CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Human rights are core standards acknowledging the need for dignified life for all people in the world. **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁸**, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948, is a revolutionary document, and continues to serve as the most important global human rights instrument. It emphasizes that freedom, justice and peace in the world are based on the recognition of the dignity and worth of human beings and the equality of men and women.

These two core values define many others that serve as a fundamental principle of coexistence for people and societies alike. Some of them are:

- Freedom
- Respect for others
- Non-discrimination
- Tolerance
- Justice
- Responsibility

Because of their vulnerability in society and their greater exposure to abuse, discrimination and violence and human rights deprivation, women and children are subject to special care and legal support. The rights of women and children affect

the protection of their physical integrity and autonomy of will - not to be subject to emotional, physical and sexual abuse, to live in a safe and secure environment, to be able to freely express their desires, to realize their potential. The protection of these rights is a guarantee for social progress and the prosperity of societies, so it is regulated by a number of international documents. We will briefly mention some of the most important ones.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child⁹

The document obliges states to provide special guarantees and care, including appropriate legal protection for children, due to their physical and mental immaturity and vulnerability.

Article 2 regulates the guarantee of the rights of every child without any discrimination, regardless of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property status, disability, birth or other status of the child or his or her parents or legal guardians. It is the responsibility of states to care for the well-being of children and to protect them, being guided in all their actions by their highest interests (Art. 3). The right to life, as well as the possibilities for survival and development, are fundamental to the Convention (Art. 6), as

⁷ <https://depts.washington.edu/dbpeds/healthy-gender-development.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

⁹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

well as the right of children to express their views freely on all matters concerning them, which should be given importance, corresponding to the age and maturity of the child (Art. 12). A priority of the Convention is the protection of children from all forms of physical or mental violence, assault or abuse, neglect or negligence, abuse or exploitation, including sexual offenses, while in the care of their parents or one of them, of their legal guardian or any other person to whom they are entrusted (Art. 19). The right to education is considered not only in the context of accessibility, availability, comprehensiveness, elimination of ignorance and illiteracy, but also in the facilitated access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women¹⁰

Building on the Charter of the United Nations and the belief in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equality of men and women, the Convention provides guidelines for changing the social and cultural patterns of behavior of men and women in order to achieve eradication of prejudices and elimination of customs that are based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of one of the sexes or the stereotyping of the role of men and women (Article 5 a). Special attention is also paid to the provision of family upbringing, which includes a correct understanding of motherhood as a social function and recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, provided that in all cases the interests of children are predominant (Article 5 b). The document highlights states' commitments to eliminate discrimination against women in several key areas:

- Participation in the political and public life of the country - the right to vote, to be elected to public bodies, to hold public

office, to participate in decision-making (Article 7).

- Access to quality training programs at all stages of education, opportunities for free orientation in choosing a profession or specialty, equal rights in receiving scholarships and education grants, as well as special measures to limit the number of girls who drop out of school (Art. 10).
- Employment through equal employment opportunities, free choice of profession and opportunity for career advancement, the right to equal pay for equal work (Article 11).
- Access to medical care (art. 12), the right to family benefits and financial crediting, as well as to participation in cultural life (art. 13).
- Equal rights within the marital relationship, including free choice of partner, equal rights and obligations as parents, opportunity to combine family commitments with education and realization, equality between partners in possession, acquisition, management, use and disposal of property (Article 16).

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women¹¹ (CEDAW), which monitors the implementation of the Convention

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is the body of independent experts that monitors the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The CEDAW Committee consists of 23 women's rights experts from around the world. For the first time, after the democratic changes, Bulgaria has a CEDAW expert – Ms. Genoveva Tisheva¹² – with a term of office 2019-2022.

There is an **Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women¹³**, which includes:

¹⁰ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Profesionalinterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>

¹¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/cedaw/pages/cedawindex.aspx>

¹² <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRbodies/CEDAW/Pages/Membership.aspx>

¹³ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Profesionalinterest/Pges/OPCEDAW.aspx>

- Communication procedure - entitles individuals and groups of women to complain to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for violations of the Convention.
- Investigation procedure - enables the Committee to conduct investigations into serious and systematic violations of women's rights.

General Recommendation № 36 (2017/ UN CEDAW) UN on the right of girls and women to education¹⁴

The right to education and equality in education is an integral part of women's rights. The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education¹⁵ stated that "..... the right to education for women and girls ... is essential to eliminate all forms of discrimination that women and girls suffer from". Thus, this right can be called a "protective" right, which is in the category of social, economic and cultural rights and is included in many international documents. It contains many other rights, such as the right to receive or have access to education; the right to choose education; the right to equality in education. In short, education must be available, accessible, affordable, adequate to needs and adaptable to different situations.

The right not to be discriminated in education is a specific right. Unlike gender-based violence against women or climate change and the reduction of the impact of natural disasters, which are not explicitly regulated in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)¹⁶, but which are identified by the CEDAW as falling within the scope of the Convention (the right to freedom from discrimination, the right to health, the right of women in rural areas), Article 10 of the Convention explicitly obliges states to take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination in education between women and men and between girls and boys. Art. 10 regulates in detail the following:

„States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against

women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

(a) The same conditions for career and vocational guidance, for access to studies and for the achievement of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories in rural as well as in urban areas; this equality shall be ensured in pre-school, general, technical, professional and higher technical education, as well as in all types of vocational training;

(b) Access to the same curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and school premises and equipment of the same quality;

(c) The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods;

(d) The same opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants;

(e) The same opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult and functional literacy programmes, particularly those aimed at reducing, at the earliest possible time, any gap in education existing between men and women;

(f) The reduction of female student drop-out rates and the organization of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely;

(g) The same Opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education;”

On 16 November 2017, the CEDAW Committee finalized and published General Recommendation № 36 on the right of girls and women to education¹⁷. It begins with a strong emphasis on education and its „pivotal transformative and empowering role in promoting human rights values and is recognized as the pathway to gender equality and women's

¹⁴ Developed by Mrs Genoveva Tisheva, a CEDAW expert

¹⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/education/sreducation/Pages/SREducatinIndex.aspx>

¹⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/documents/profesionalinterest/cedaw.pdf>

¹⁷ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1_Global/CEDAW_C_GC_36_8422_E.pdf

empowerment"

Based on statistics on school drop-outs and literacy data, the Committee notes that girls and women are initially disproportionately discriminated in terms of access, opportunities for regular school attendance, treatment, educational outcomes and career opportunities. The Committee links the recommendation to Objective 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which seeks to "*ensure inclusive and equal quality education and promote opportunities for lifelong learning.*"

General recommendation № 36 is organized around 3 main topics:

- access to education;
- equal treatment and opportunities in education;
- how education affects rights such as the right to gender equality outside the educational sphere, emphasizing that even if men's educational attainment is lower, they occupy better positions.

Here are some of the main recommendations related to state obligations under Art. 10 of the Convention outlined in this document:

- to provide universal, free and compulsory education up to the level of secondary education for all and to eliminate the unbalanced distribution of budget funds for the education of vulnerable and marginalized groups of girls;
- integrate age appropriate education on women's human rights and the CEDAW Convention in school curricula at all levels;
- undertake constitutional amendments and/or other appropriate legislative action to ensure the protection and enforcement of girls' and women's rights, to, within and through education;
- eliminate gender stereotyping by developing and implementing policies and programmes for gender equality on all levels;
- encouraging the media to project positive

and non-sexualized images of women, including ethnic and minority girls and women, elderly women and girls and women with disabilities.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action¹⁸

The 1995 document is considered to be the most comprehensive global policy framework and action plan for women's empowerment and gender equality in the world. The Platform for Action covers 12 priority areas, for each of which strategic objectives have been identified, as well as actions to be taken by governments and other stakeholders at national, regional and international levels. The strategic areas in which there are critical issues for the progress and development of women are:

1. Women and poverty (social exclusion) - The strategic goal in this area is to create specific gender sensitive policies and strategies that take into account the needs and constraints of women living in poverty and social exclusion.
2. Women and education - Overcoming illiteracy among women and ensuring equal access to education. Creating conditions for lifelong learning for girls and women.
3. Women and health - Improving access to adequate, affordable and quality lifelong health. Strengthening women's health prevention programs.
4. Violence against women - Take comprehensive measures to combat violence against women. Combating trafficking in women and providing support to victims of prostitution and trafficking violence.
5. Women and armed conflict - Protection of women living in armed or other conflicts or under foreign occupation. Limiting human rights violations in conflict situations. Providing protection, support and training to refugee women.
6. Women and the economy - Promoting women's economic independence, including their access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control of economic resources. Providing training, information and access to low-income women's markets. Elimination of labor segregation and all forms of discrimination in

¹⁸ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>

employment.

7. Women in power and decision-making - Ensuring equal access and full participation of women in power structures and in decision-making.

8. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women - Gender mainstreaming in legislation, government policies, programs and projects.

9. Women's human rights - Ensuring equality and protection against discrimination in law and practice.

10. Stereotyping of women and inequality in their access to communication systems and especially the media - Increasing women's opportunities for participation and expression in public space and their access to decision-making processes in the media and new communication technologies. Ensuring a balanced and non-stereotypical image of women in the media.

11. Women and the environment - Active involvement of women at all levels in environmental decision-making processes. Integrating gender issues and gender perspectives into sustainable development policies and programs.

12. Girls - Eliminate all forms of discrimination, violence and exploitation against girls. Increasing their participation in social, economic and political life. Increasing the role of the family in improving the situation of girls.

European policies to promote gender equality

The European Union has made significant progress in the field of gender equality in recent decades. This is the result of:

- equal treatment legislation;
- the integration of the principle of gender equality in all other policies;
- specific measures for the advancement of women.

Equality between women and men is one of the fundamental values set out in Art. 8 of the **Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union**¹⁹.

The guarantee of equality between women and men in all areas, including employment, labor

and remuneration, is also regulated in Art. 23 of the **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union**²⁰. In the same document, Article 21 states "Any form of discrimination based in particular on sex, race, color, ethnic or social origin, genetic characteristics, language, religion or belief, political or other opinions, belonging to national minority, property status, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited."

Given its leading role in the protection of human rights, the Council of Europe has adopted the **Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence**²¹ (the "Istanbul Convention", named in this way because of the name of the place where it was open for signature). This is considered to be the most comprehensive international legal instrument for preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence as human rights violations. It notes that „violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between women and men, which have led to domination over, and discrimination against, women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women” and emphasizes the structural nature of violence against women as gender-based violence, which forces women to be subordinated to men.

The purposes of this Convention are to:

- a) protect women against all forms of violence, and prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence;
- b) contribute to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and promote substantive equality between women and men, including by empowering women;
- c) design a comprehensive framework, policies and measures for the protection of and assistance to all victims of violence against women and domestic violence;
- d) promote international co-operation with a view to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence;

¹⁹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12012E%FTXT>

²⁰ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:12016P/TXT>

²¹ <https://www.coe.int/fr/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/09000168008482e>

e) provide support and assistance to organisations and law enforcement agencies to effectively co-operate in order to adopt an integrated approach to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence.

The Istanbul Convention requires states that have ratified²² it to adopt a comprehensive set of measures to combat all forms of violence against women and domestic violence. Any provision in the Convention is intended to prevent the occurrence of violence, to assist victims and to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice. The Convention requires criminalization and legal sanctions for various forms of violence against women, such as domestic violence, harassment, sexual harassment and psychological violence.

The Convention clearly states that violence against women and domestic violence cannot be considered private matters and that states have a duty to prevent violence, protect victims and punish perpetrators through the adoption and implementation of comprehensive and integrated policies. In addition to legal obligations, the Convention also sends an important political message to society as a whole that violence against women and domestic violence are unacceptable. Its mission is to shed light on the real situation of many women and girls who are victims of violence, to raise awareness and to lead to a change in ways of thinking in the long run.

The Convention places the obligation to prevent and combat violence against women in the broader framework of achieving equality between women and men. In this way, its authors refer to the relations between women and men, their roles and inherent functions in society, which is why they find it important to propose a definition of the term gender. This term is not intended to replace the biological definition of "sex" or the terms "women" and "men", but to point out the extent to which inequalities, stereotypes and, as a consequence, violence, do not stem from biological differences social constructions, in other words, from attitudes and perceptions of what women and men should be

and should be in society. The Convention contains a number of provisions that challenge perceptions of women's inferiority to men and the roles and behaviors that women and men should play in the private and public spheres. It opposes attempts to:

- to imprison women and men in traditional roles, thus limiting their personal, educational and professional development and their life opportunities in general;
- to justify and uphold patriarchy, the historical power relations of men over women, and sexist attitudes that impede the progress of gender equality;
- to oppose the right of women to live a life without violence.

In 2020, humanity faced a new crisis – **the COVID-19 pandemic** – which brought new challenges in protecting the rights of children and especially girls. The outbreak of COVID-19 deeply affected the environment in which children and adolescents grow and develop from early childhood to late adolescence. The lives of children of all ages and in all countries have changed dramatically. They have been affected by the socio-economic consequences of the crisis and, in some cases, by the mitigating restrictive measures introduced, which are still difficult to assess to what extent the benefits have not been harmed.

The ongoing crisis could increase the number of children living in poor households by up to 117 million by the end of 2020, according to the latest analysis by UNICEF and Save the Children²³. Immediate loss of income often means that families are less able to afford basic necessities such as food and clothing, have limited access to health care and education, and are at greater risk of violence, exploitation, and abuse. The crisis has worsened access to education for children. Schools were closed in 188 countries, affecting more than 1.6 billion children and young people. Not all countries have managed to introduce

²² The Istanbul Convention wasn't ratified by 6 EU member states, Bulgaria being one of them: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/210/signatures>

²³ <https://data.unicef.org/topic/covid-19-and-children/>

distance learning, and among low-income countries the share is only 30%. While the available evidence suggests that the direct impact of COVID-19 on infant and adolescent mortality is very limited, it is estimated that child survival will be permanently affected by the effects of the pandemic. According to a study of 118 low- and middle-income countries, an additional 1.2 million deaths of children under the age of five could occur in just six months. With regard to violence, a number of factors related to social exclusion measures are likely to lead to an increased risk for children due to growing household tensions, stress, economic insecurity, job loss and social exclusion. Children may also be more likely to witness domestic violence.

Girls, especially those coming from marginalized groups, will be particularly affected by the secondary effects of COVID-19²⁴, because of the

risk of becoming victims of double discrimination based on age and gender. Measures to limit the spread of the disease have exacerbated existing inequalities and increased girls' drop-outs because they have less access to the technical devices and internet needed for distance learning than boys. The expert predicts that the economic downturn, unemployment and school closures will increase sexual violence, exploitation, trafficking, child labor and harmful practices in local communities, such as forced marriages, early pregnancy, and genital mutilation. All these negative trends will affect young girls the most. This group is more dependent on medical services, sexual and reproductive health programs, social services, employment agencies. Difficult access to these support systems during the pandemic has significantly increased the risk to girls' lives and health.

²⁴ Plan International/John von Ahlen „COVID-19 The impact on girls” - https://gbvguidelines.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/covid_19_impact_on_girls_3_.pdf



II. CLASSIC FAIRY TALES²⁵ FOR CHILDREN

1. FAIRY TALES AND THE WORLD OF THE CHILD

Fairy tales are passed down from generation to generation, as a rite of passage into the history of the world and the most meaningful human experience. Their influence on shaping the perceptions and socialization of children is so powerful that the humanities no longer treat them simply as entertaining bedtime stories. For centuries fairy tales have served as a source of morals, ethics and social norms. Sometimes their universal messages guide people throughout their lives, serving as the measure of "right and wrong," "good and evil," "beautiful and ugly."

Fairy tales help girls and boys grow up, face their deepest fears and desires and shape their values. They stimulate the emotional, intellectual and behavioral development of children and promote their mental health. There are some good reasons to explain why children find fairy tales so appealing.

Fairy tales open up opportunities for children to develop their imagination. Each of us has once been part of the magical world of fairy tales, where miracles happen and everything is possible, but as we grow up it is getting more and more difficult to go beyond the limits of rational thinking. This ability is granted mostly to children under 11 years old, who join the story, bringing their endless imagination, with no resistance, thoughts or criticism. The reality of fairy tales comes close to children's fascination with fantasy, their empathy with unrealistic stories, and their need to identify with characters of supernatural abilities.

The symbolic character of fairy tales is another source of fascination for children. Imagery in fairy tales is rich of symbols going far back into the past of humanity. We find them in myths, religion and dreams. These symbols speak effortlessly to young children because they embody their inner world: their fears, wishes, and the images they tend to identify with. Children, with their limited sources of knowledge and experience, feel close to symbols and use them to understand the world in a much more effortless way than they would, if

they had the ability to resort to rational knowledge.

Fairy tales show the world the way children imagine it to be. They tell stories about conflicts, difficulties, and relationships similar to the ones children experience. The story line is simple and easy to follow, giving children the chance to compare them to their own experiences and in this way to get to know themselves and their relationships better. There is no need to explain fairy tales because they grasp complex existential issues with brevity and amazing clarity, in line with the ideas and the knowledge that children have. They offer clear and articulate distinctions between good and evil, the good hero and the evil one, so that children needn't question the stories, or the characters. Moreover, fairy tales serve as a matrix, helping children grasp better the world around them.

The folktales are real²⁶. They piece together a universe of events, characters, and themes that have excited and troubled humanity for ages; they feature folks of all ages from childhood to old age; they touch on the strengths and weaknesses of human nature and the contrasts we experience in our lives: the poor and the rich, the good and the evil, the brave and the weak, the ugly and the beautiful. They come to us rich in emotions, exciting and entertaining, posing the universal questions about freedom, friendship, love and other human aspirations. Fairy tales can bring about extremities (abuse, violence, deprivation) that may be difficult topics of children to explore otherwise. Being culturally sanctioned, these stories allow for the exploration and discussion of conflicting themes and stimulate children to develop their critical thinking abilities. The project partners decided to work with children, using the classic texts, compiled by the Brothers Grimm, Charles Perrault and Hans Christian Andersen, because the versions of Walt Disney, which are usually more familiar to children, tend at times to use the "magic world" of fairy tales for private commercial pursuits.

²⁵ These are not the fairy tales endorsed by Walt Disney. They are rather folk tales, collected and published by the Grimm brothers in 1812.

Later they were revised by Wilhelm Grimm, with new elements added and others taken out, to please the reading public tastes at the time.

Charles Perrault also collected, published (in fact as early as 1697) and later revised folk tales.

²⁶ Calvino I. (1956), Italian fairy tales – Collection of popular tradition over the past hundred years and transcribed in Italian from the various dialects.

Fairy tales help children get prepared for hardships in life²⁷. Even though they employ fictional stories and characters, fairy tales can help children cope with the hardships of real life. In addition to presenting a variety of issues, they also provide solutions to conflicts. In this way, fairy tales can support and further promote children's mental development by encouraging them to overcome their own fears and anxieties. The classic tales have a clear purposeful structure, reinstated with different story lines and characters. It invites children into the story, letting them live side by side with the protagonist and leave as winners. There are several important lessons that fairy tales teach. The first one is the lesson about the happy ending, bringing the values of confidence and courage to help overcome life's difficulties, as well as the clear purposeful structure, reinstated with different story lines and characters. It invites children into the story, letting them live side by side with the protagonist and leave as winners. There are several important lessons that fairy tales teach. The first one is the lesson about the happy ending, bringing the values of confidence and courage to help overcome life's difficulties, as well as the prospect of being rewarded for facing troubles. The story line always follows a pattern: first come the shortcomings and sufferings, followed by the trials when the hero comes out, and finally there is the reward for confronting troubles. The second lesson is about facing difficulties in stead of avoiding them in order to guarantee the end result: success and satisfaction.

Fairy tales address children's mental needs²⁸. "These "real" fairy tales spoke on a deeply subconscious level about problems children and adolescents met during their years of growing up: how to reconcile conflicting emotions towards one's parents, sibling rivalry, sexuality, the identification as a developing man or woman, becoming accepted for the unique person one is, etc.", note Lars Gimstedt and Hildigerdur Jakobsdóttir Gimstedt in their book on Fairy Tale Therapy. Fairy tales offer symbolic solutions to these problems, letting children get in touch with their "dangerous" emotions in a safe and constructive manner. The fairy tales, closest to

the original folk tales, have a therapeutic effect, and antagonists and scary story lines contribute to it in their own right. Misled by the intention to protect children from bad feelings and discomfort, adults sometimes resort to changing classic tales, adding good characters and omitting the bad ones. Some parents for example, skip reading the parts of the story where the Little Red Riding Hood is devoured by the Wolf or Hansel and Gretel are abandoned by their parents. It should be wise to keep in mind, though that these fairy tales, and time survivors, are rich in symbols that relate to the children's unconscious, and trigger their emotions as well as their growth potential. Good heroes and happy ending are as much important as evil doers and scary moments. Original folk tales have been successfully used as therapeutic techniques. "Upgrading" traditional folk tales, "straightening them up" and omitting the scary parts result into severing their links to the unconscious inner world of children and weakening significantly their therapeutic power. „Fairy tales are important not because they show children how life is, but because they give form to deep fears and dreams about life through fantasy“, wrote Sally Goddard Blythe, Director of the Institute of Neuro-Physiological Psychology and author of *The Genius of Natural Childhood: The Secrets of Thriving Children*. Fairy tales create a safe environment for children to understand and name certain feelings that they find confusing and difficult.

In conclusion, fairy tales are a powerful tool for shaping young children's values and moral categories. Through fairy tales, at a very young age they begin to develop their ideas about the world. Their own feelings, internal conflicts, relationships inside the family, with relatives and peers are projected within this fantasy reality. Fairy tales bring answers to children's questions and help them to navigate the world around them despite their fragile age and lack of life experience.

Fairy tales stimulate the acquisition of certain knowledge in line with societal demands. They are a tool for consolidating dominant attitudes and, as a result, certain social relationships, characteristics, patterns of behavior and values are never questioned, challenged or criticized, but accepted as the norm.

²⁷ Prof. Svetlana Stoeicheva, at an interview for the Bulgarian News Agency of March 10th, 2017

²⁸ https://psykosyntesforum.se/fairytales_therapy.html

2. HOW TO USE FAIRY TALES TO INTRODUCE THE TOPIC OF GENDER EQUALITY IN THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN?

In today's age of globalization and endless opportunities offered by the development of technology, lack of self-confidence, economic dependence, lack of education and profession, unemployment and social exclusion deprive many women and some men of a dignified, interesting and diverse life. The stories we present to children continue to influence their personal and social growth because they provide them with role models that, as we have seen, can shape their lives.

This is a serious responsibility for parents, teachers and society at large. Bringing up boys and girls as equals, and starting at an early age, is a task facing all adults, because it will subsequently lead to partnerships at home, at school and at work; it will limit violence and make them open up to knowledge and development; ready for their authentic expression, satisfaction and fulfilling life. And this is the right of every human person: to have a dignified life and respect differences. Our society has reached a level of cultural development that may require to interpret these old yet beloved, childhood fairy tales in line with the values of equality and respect.

In educational activities with preschool and primary school children, classic children's tales can be successfully used to encourage their critical thinking and challenge restrictive stereotypes about women and men. The key concepts to be followed towards this goal are the following:

- approach based on human rights;
- sensitivity and understanding of the importance of social expectations and norms towards girls and boys and their impact on children;
- seeing stereotypes as historically structured and culturally and socially acceptable roles for women and men, which generate inequality and are a prerequisite for discrimination and violence;
- using fairy tales as a medium closest to children's knowledge and interests to introduce and discuss gender equality.

Regarding the pedagogical activities linked to

gender equality we offer the following methodological guidelines:

- systemic approach and putting things into perspective: the topic is complex and at times sensitive, the context of the social and cultural environment should be considered, and significant adult figures - parents, teachers, mentors, sports coaches and others - should get involved in the process.
- focus on opportunities rather than limitations: adopt a positive perspective that focuses not on problems but on solutions. Provide guidelines for change and optimism: they would come closest to children's desire for a good ending.
- openness to dialogue: enable children to think autonomously, outside the limits set by adults. Avoid strengthening stereotypes. When children reflect on the topic of gender equality they should be encouraged to think outside stereotypes without fear of being ridiculed and rejected.
- metaphorical approach: seek impact within a fantasy reality and in this way avoid opposing the values and norms that children have adopted in their family, environment and culture. Children need to be able to adapt new knowledge to their reality, not confront it.
- integrate physical, cognitive and emotional experience: to develop healthy relationships between girls and boys children should be engaged on different levels and accumulate knowledge, relate it to experience and integrate it into the inner world of the child.



PART TWO – THE NATIONAL EXPERIENCE

I. ITALY

INTRODUCTION

In the context of the project "*Fairy Tales*", Defence for Children Italy rolled out activities that aimed to recognise, understand and challenge the gender stereotypes, which can be found in traditional fairy tales. The activities engaged boys and girls aged between five and seven years old, as well as teachers and parents. Together, they explored situations where opportunities or obstacles arise for the expression of the diversity and uniqueness of every person. The project was implemented in collaboration with the Association 'La Stanza', which has been working in Genoa for many years in support of the development of children and youth through intercultural and environmental pedagogy, artistic forms of expression and cultural programmes. The Association has long-standing expertise in organizing workshops, teacher training courses and family programmes.

The project activities were carried out in close collaboration with the teachers of two classes of the primary school of the *Convitto Nazionale Colombo* in Genoa. The school participated in the project as an associate partner and organised meetings with the parents of the children who took part in the activities. The project comprised also training courses for teachers, which, at the time of writing this report, are still in progress. These meetings proved to be very useful and valuable to discuss and validate the project's approach together with the teachers and other professionals from the socio-educational field.

The project was conceived on the basis of social learning theories and builds on the assumption that children acquire social stereotypes and cultural symbols also from the stories that they hear and listen to or that they see performed or in movies from early childhood. Gender prejudices engrained in the content, language and images of fairy tales for children can lead children to accept these stereotypes and to perpetuate them unconsciously.

Even though there was consensus on the approach, many questions emerged in relation to the theoretical basis and the working hypothesis for the project activities. A key question was how to address these sensitive matters with boys and girls of the targeted age group. These questions will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

This report provides a synthesis of the project activities and the experience made in Italy, while also offering pedagogical insights on how to address questions related to the promotion of gender equality with children aged between five and seven years old.

After a brief overview of the most relevant national laws, policies and programmes promoting gender equality in Italy, i.e. the normative framework of the context in which the project activities took place, the report proceeds to describe the theoretical framework and rationale that guided the activities. These points of reference create a roadmap for the steps that were considered essential to build a path that made sense, in relation to our history and our heritage of knowledge and skills.

Subsequently, the structure and methods of the "*Fairy Tales*" workshops held in Italy are described.

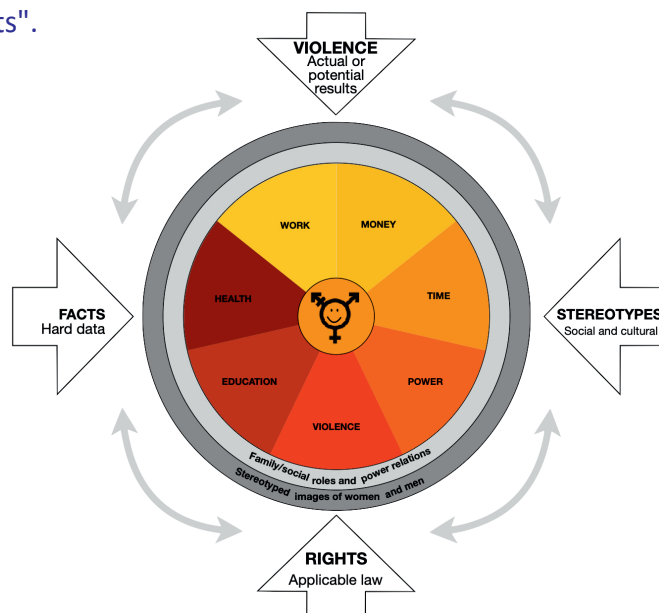
In the concluding chapter, the report provides a selection of guidelines and pedagogical insights that we considered important for the work with and for children.

POLICIES, PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

The Italian Constitution provides for the equality of all citizens as one of its fundamental values. The right to equality applies "without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinions, personal and social conditions"²⁹ and includes the access to equal opportunities and the possibility to fully participate in the political, social and economic life of the country. The Italian legal framework promoting gender equality is determined by the National Code of Equal Opportunities for Women and Men adopted in 2006³⁰. In 2020, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies adopted the Three-Year Plan of Positive Action, which provides for specific measures to eliminate any forms of discrimination that could manifest themselves in different areas. The objectives include, among others, to guarantee equal opportunities in access to employment, in career development and professional training, as well as an improved organization of work and employment with a view to promoting work-life balance and, more generally, a culture aimed at respecting the principle of non-discrimination on the basis of gender.

Despite the notable progress made in promoting gender equality in the legal and policy framework, the measures taken for its implementation and the guarantees available in practice to ensure the equality of all citizens continue to face a number of serious challenges. The Global Gender Gap Report³¹ is ranking Italy 76th out of 153 countries in the world. It measures indicators related to the opportunities for participation in economic life, education, health and political engagement. In the European Union, the Gender Equality Index of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)³² ranks Italy 14th, 4.4 points below the European average.

The Fairy Tales project adopted the EIGE indicators as a starting point for the reflection on how to address gender inequalities in activities with boys and girls (for further details, see section 3.1). We find it useful, therefore, to provide a brief overview of the legal standards and policies that have promoted gender equality in Italy and the progress made over the past years, specifically in light of these indicators. When developing the working methodology for this project, we referred to these indicators as "determinants".



The determinants relate to the following areas: work and employment; the availability of economic resources; participation in decision-making and the ability and power to influence these processes;

²⁹ Constitution of Republic of Italy Article 3

³⁰ Law 198/2006.

³¹ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

³² <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-index-2019-italy>

health, which is understood as the overall well-being of the person; protection from all forms of violence; education and training, also in the context of professional training and personal development; leisure time available, taking into account the time used for domestic work and care as opposed to time spent with recreational, cultural and social activities.

In Italy, the equal opportunity policies started to develop with considerable delay compared to other European countries, mainly due to historical and cultural reasons. Despite the constitutional reform and the feminist movement for the emancipation of women, it was only at the beginning of the 1990s and upon the pressure exerted by the European Union that this sector started to evolve. Subsequently, the Italian normative framework has been gradually reformed to be in line with that of other European countries.

The 2019 EIGE report shows a considerable improvement with regard to the "gender gap" in the context of work and employment, an area where, despite the progress made, Italy remains on the lowest rank of all EU Member States. The legislative reforms made over the past 70 years have led to a continuous increase of women's employment, in particular the increasing entitlements and guarantees for working mothers, a development that started as early as the 1950s. Law reform provided for, among others, protection from dismissal from the beginning of pregnancy through the child's first year of life; a prohibition for employed pregnant women to transport or lift weights or to carry out work, which is otherwise dangerous, strenuous or unhealthy; and a prohibition for pregnant women to work during the last three months of pregnancy and for eight weeks after childbirth, whereas the time-frames can be expanded. In the 1960s, a number of laws were adopted that prohibited any type of dismissal of women in relation to marriage and provided for measures to support the maternity of agricultural workers³³. In the 1970s, the foundation for effective equality in employment was created by introducing a legal prohibition of discrimination in access to employment, vocational training, and income, as well as the recognition of professional qualifications and correlated salaries³⁴. In 2001, these and other laws and regulations were integrated in a single Act, which reorganised the legal regulations concerning the health of workers, maternity, paternity and parental leave, rest and annual leave, the care of sick children, seasonal and temporary work, home-based and domestic work, as well as the rules enjoyed by self-employed women and free lancers³⁵. European Union law on work and employment and its principle of equal opportunity have been transposed in Italian national law since the early 2000s³⁶.

In addition to the developments in the normative framework, there are many other factors that have contributed to the steady increase in women's participation in the labour market over the past forty years: cultural changes, an increase in the level of education, the transition from an agricultural to an industrial and tertiary economy, a growing number of foreign women working in family services and, in recent years, also the tightening of pension eligibility requirements³⁷.

Across Europe, including particularly in Italy, it is today still more difficult for women than for men to access employment, especially in high-level positions, leadership roles and positions with decision-making power³⁸. The so-called "glass ceiling" is still in place and difficult to break through.

³³ Law 7/1963, Prohibition of dismissal of female employees due to marriage and changes to the law of 26 August 1950, No. 860, "Physical and economic protection of motherhood in employment".

³⁴ Law 903/1977, "Equal treatment of men and women in the field of employment and occupation".

³⁵ Consolidation Act No. 151/2001 "Consolidation Act of the legislative provisions on the protection and support of motherhood and fatherhood".

³⁶ See in particular Law 215/2003 Transposition of the Directive 2000/43/EU implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin; Law 216/2003 Transposition of Directive 2000/78/EU establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation; and Law 67/2006 "Measures for the judicial protection of people with disabilities who are victims of discrimination".

³⁷ Hearing of the President of the National Institute of Statistics Giorgio Allewa, "Constitutional Affairs" Commission of the Chamber of Deputies, Rome, 25 October 2017, accessed from https://www4.istat.it/it/files/2017/10/A-Audizione-parit%C3%A0-di-genere-25-ottobre_definitivo.pdf?title=Parit%C3%A0+tra+donne+e+uomini+-+26%2Fott%2F2017+-+Testo+integrale.pdf.

³⁸ https://www.openpolis.it/in-think-tank-e-fondazioni-le-donne-sono-poche-e-con-posizioni-marginali/?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_term=MailUp&utm_content=MailUp&utm_campaign=Newsletter.

With regard to the participation of all citizens in political and social life, the awareness of equal opportunities in this area started to grow only in the beginning of the 1990s. Italian women voted for the first time in 1946. Although Article 3 of the Constitution of the Italian Republic provides for the principle of formal and substantive gender equality, it was not until 1956 that women were admitted to certain careers in the judiciary³⁹. Women had previously been precluded from positions in the judiciary due to the assumption that an anatomical-physiological predisposition would allegedly make them unable to judge because they were victims of hysteria and irrationality⁴⁰. Only in 2003, however, when Article 51 of the Constitution was amended, women were granted the equal legal right to access employment in public offices and elected positions.

In the area of leisure time, the measures taken thus far have not yet succeeded to overcome the uneven distribution of family-related tasks and household chores among men and women. This continues to affect women's work and employment in a negative way. The most recent data available from Italy confirm what has been reported at the international level⁴¹. In our country, women in employment work 8 hours per week less in paid work, but 16 hours per week more in unpaid work compared to men. As a result, the weekly workload of employed women in Italy, including paid and unpaid work, amounts to more than 57 hours while that of men amounts to 50 hours or less⁴².

With regard to the availability of economic resources, EIGE data from 2019 show that women earn on average 18% less than men do. Women continue to have less access to top management positions, are more likely to be employed in part-time jobs and have more frequent career breaks⁴³. These factors contribute to the gender gap in relation to income.

In the field of education, there has been a "gender overtaking": women study more, the majority of university graduates are female and statistically, women have better grades⁴⁴. In Italy, as well as in almost all European countries, the school dropout rate is lower among girls than among boys. Some studies have shown, however, that there is a "hidden curriculum" at school, i.e. a tendency towards educational segregation where female students are rather directed towards areas traditionally considered suitable for women, such as education and care, and male students towards scientific-technological subjects, thus reconfirming some of the typical stereotypes and expectations⁴⁵. These stereotype expectations are affirmed also within the schoolbooks used in primary school, which display predominantly male figures, as well as a stereotyped view of male and female professions and a language that uses an undistinguished male⁴⁶. In order to overcome these critical issues, gender and sexual education should be systematically introduced in all school levels. Today, these subjects are still missing from the curricula despite the various Conventions ratified by Italy that would make it a requirement (in particular CEDAW and its Optional Protocol⁴⁷ and the Istanbul Convention⁴⁸). During

³⁹ In fact, only with the Law of 27 December 1956 No. 1441 "Women's participation in the administration of justice in Jury Courts and Juvenile Courts", women were allowed access to the judiciary, "albeit limited to the functions of popular (ordinary or substitute) judges and members of Juvenile Courts".

⁴⁰ L'evoluzione dell'immagine della donna nell'Italia degli anni Cinquanta: "Vie Nuove" e "Famiglia Cristiana", Simona Zannoni, 2018.

⁴¹ ISTAT, 2019, *I Tempi della Vita Quotidiana. Lavoro, Conciliazione, Parità di Genere e Benessere Soggettivo* [The Times of Everyday Life. Work, Conciliation, Gender Equality and Subjective Wellbeing], accessed from <https://www.istat.it/it/files/2019/05/ebook-i-tempi-della-vita-quotidiana.pdf>

⁴² <https://www.ingenere.it/articoli/liberiamo-il-tempo-dele-donne>

⁴³ <https://www.istat.it/donne-uomini/bloc-2d.html?lang=it>

⁴⁴ <https://www.istat.it/donne-uomini/bloc-2d.html?lang=it>, ma anche Euridice https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjWucOdItHpAhXF-aQKHaxCosQFjABegQIARAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Feuridice.indire.it%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2017%2F06%2FGender_IT.pdf&usq=AOvVaw1BLVNnlqXxNsJsdJARdivF

⁴⁵ Elisabetta Musi, 2015, *A scuola di pari opportunità, Il sistema scolastico: un circuito decisivo – ma trascurato – per educare al rispetto dell'identità e della differenza di genere* [A school of equal opportunities, The school system: a decisive - but neglected - circuit for education in respect of identity and gender differences].

⁴⁶ Where the male gender is used to indicate the universality of people, automatically giving more centrality to the male gender. See: Pink is the new black, Stereotipi di genere nella scuola dell'infanzia - Abbatecola E., Stagi L., Rosenberg & Sellier 2017.

⁴⁷ CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women New York, 18 December 1979 ratified in Italy in 1985.

⁴⁸ Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, 11 May 2011, ratified by Italy in 2013

the past years, there have been many attempts to introduce gender education in schools, but the relevant proposals have not been approved or are still pending. This is partly due to an anti-gender campaign, which has been particularly fierce, also at the political level⁴⁹, and which was supported by anti-democratic movements of dubious origin⁵⁰.

In 2015, following the school reform, the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research developed a "National Plan for Education for Respect".⁵¹ The National Plan aimed to promote a culture of respect within schools that values differences and contrasts homophobia and gender-based violence. In spite of the numerous educational initiatives underway to address these aspects with children, the attention dedicated to these areas remains inadequate, which is not in compliance with the relevant legislation.

In relation to health, the EIGE presents a high score for Italy, unlike all the other domains examined. The analysis, however, does not consider aspects related to reproductive health, for instance, which would include sexual education at school. This was also noted by some of the participants in our courses.

Furthermore, if we consider the aspect of protection from violence, which is closely linked to health, while there have been concrete developments in recent years in the legal domain, the necessary measures have not been taken to ensure the effective implementation of these laws. In fact, gender-based violence does not appear to be decreasing in Italy: in 2018, 142 femicides were reported (an increase of 0.7% compared to the previous year), a large part of which were committed in the family.⁵²

Italy has only recently introduced new laws to protect the person. In particular, rape and sexual assault are a new and single criminal offence, and sexual violence has become a crime against the personal freedom, whereas it used to be a crime against public morals and decency.

Italy has ratified the CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention, instruments that impose a specific obligation on States parties to remove any obstacles to women's effective enjoyment of their fundamental rights. Despite this progress and the various normative measures adopted in recent years, the CEDAW Committee has nevertheless reprimanded our country in relation to femicide, noting that "socio-cultural attitudes that condone domestic violence" persist in Italy.⁵³ It is therefore a cultural problem that, on the one hand, legitimises discrimination based on gender, even among those who should act to change it, and on the other hand, prevents effective measures to protect women's rights and self-determination.

The recent report of the GREVIO⁵⁴ highlights several critical issues related to budgetary appropriations, interagency coordination in responding to victims and the fragmentation of territorial services, and emphasises that the tendency to reinterpret and reorient the notion of gender equality in terms of family and maternity policies is a cause of concern.

The main obstacle to a smooth process towards gender equality is the persistence of a sexist and misogynistic culture of the Italian society at all levels. The patriarchal structure of the family is still part of Italy's cultural heritage, combined with the idea that the family has to be protected from external interference and threats that could compromise its "natural" composition. In addition, the traditional roles of men and women in the society continue to be defended and justified through a naturalistic discourse. Despite the notable progress made in the normative framework and culture, the historical traditional conception of the family considers the woman's role confined to her function as the "angel

⁴⁹ See: Marzano, M. (2015), *Papà, mamma e gender* [Dad, Mom and Gender], Novara: Utet.

⁵⁰ See: Article by Siviero, G., *Il Post*, <https://www.ilpost.it/giuliasiviero/2016/02/22/i-movimenti-no-gender-spiegati-bene/>

⁵¹ <https://www.muir.gov.it/documnets/20182/0/Piano+nazionale+ER+4.pdf/7179ab45-5a5c-4d1a-b048-5d0b6cda4f5c?version+1.0>

⁵² Report "Femminicidio e violenza di genere in Italia" ["Femicide and Gender-based Violence in Italy"], 2019, La Banca Dati EURES <https://www.eures.it/sintesi-femminicidio-e-violenza-di-genere-in-italia/>

⁵³ Concluding observations of the CEDAW Committee to the Government of Italy, 26/7/2011.

⁵⁴ GREVIO is the independent expert body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) by the Parties. The report is available from <https://rm.coe.int/grevio-report-italy-first-baseline-evaluation/168099724e>.

of the hearth”, that is exclusively as bride and mother (and never a person as such). This view remains the lead argument of the anti-gender movements that consider the autonomy and emancipation of women a threat to the much-acclaimed traditional family. On the other side, paradoxically, the communication of some leading mass media, in particular television channels, discredits and denigrates women by representing them in a way that reduces women to bodies with sexual and seducing features⁵⁵.

Up to the 1970s, the civil order remained strongly connected to the idea of a closed family unit, with an authoritarian father figure at the centre who has the power to command and correct his wife and children, who are considered uncontrolled by nature. The 1975 family law reform paved the way for a whole series of innovations. They included the introduction of divorce, the adoption of laws regulating abortion, the equality between men and women in the context of employment and positive action to remove the obstacles to such equality, as well as the elimination of *jus corrigenda*, that is the legal justification for the use of force and violence by the husband against his wife, for the alleged purpose of correction. Thanks to the impetus of European case law, the institution of marriage has also evolved. The Law on Civil Unions⁵⁶ is a reform of historic proportions as regards the protection of fundamental civil rights, but also because of its cultural importance, which leads to a shift from the concept of "family" to that of "families": different and yet, today, all worthy of being protected within our system.

2. TRAINING MODULES: THE NATIONAL EXPERIENCE

The working group that carried out the project activities in Italy, which was tasked to address such complex and sensitive issues as described above, raised a whole range of questions. The choice was not to simplify but, on the contrary, to enter the "forest" of issues that the project aimed to address, just as in a fairy tale. For this purpose, the way in which Italo Calvino describes the nature of popular folkloristic narratives was helpful and inspiring:

*"...fairy tales are real. Together, in their constantly repeated and constantly varied casuistry of human matters, they offer a general explanation of life, which was created in ancient times and preserved by the slow contemplation of the peasant consciousness up to us; they are a catalogue of the destinies of men and a women, especially for that phase in life that is all about designing one's destiny: youth, from birth that often carries within itself an aspiration or a condemnation, to the departure from home, the tests and trials to become an adult and then mature, in order to confirm for yourself that you are human. And in this summary drawing, there is everything: the drastic division of the living into kings and the poor, but their substantial equality; the persecution of the innocent and his rescue as the terms of a dialectic that is inherent in every life; the beloved one found before even knowing the person and then lost immediately, with suffering; the common fate of being under spells, that is to be determined by complex and unknown forces, and the effort to free oneself and becoming autonomous as an elementary duty, together with that of freeing others, indeed not being able to free oneself, but becoming free by liberating others; fidelity to a commitment and the purity of the heart as basic virtues that lead to salvation and triumph; beauty as a sign of grace, but which can be hidden under a robe of humble ugliness like that of a frog's body; and above all the unitary substance of everything, men beasts plants things, the infinite possibility of metamorphosis of what exists"*⁵⁷.

⁵⁵ Documentary "Il corpo delle donne" (The women's body) by L. Zanardo, available from <http://www.ilcorpodelledonne.net/documentario/>

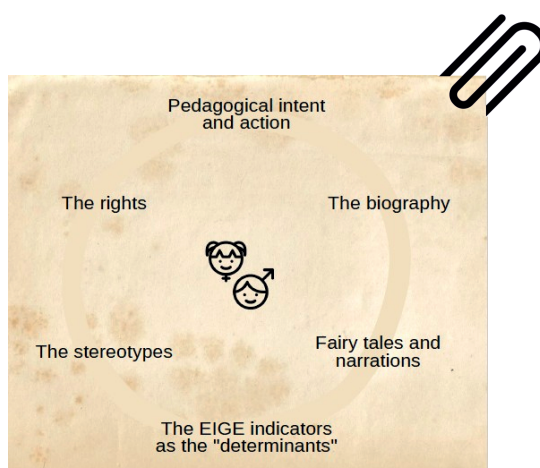
⁵⁶ Law 76/2016

⁵⁷ Calvino I. (1956), *Fiabe italiane – Raccolta dalla tradizione popolare durante gli ultimi cento anni e trascritte in lingua dai vari dialetti [Italian fairy tales – Collection of popular tradition over the past hundred years and transcribed in Italian from the various dialects]*, Mondadori.

The fairy tales, therefore, are not a simplified representation of reality but an engaging metaphorical convergence of symbols, diversity, social expectations, biographies and destinies of all human beings. This understanding certainly helped to consider the multiple dimensions of the narrative as an ideal context for a pedagogical reflection. It also offered the opportunity for this reflection to be transformed into an action that becomes meaningful for children and for adults, including those who led the project themselves. At the same time, the decision in favour of the complexity appeared to be the only one that could ensure a rich and meaningful educational path, useful to address the important themes at the heart of this project without trivializing issues that are still largely unresolved in the adult world.

The need to define and translate concepts in a way to be shared with 5-7 year old children was therefore an extraordinary opportunity to reconsider important issues that are all too often taken for granted even in advanced and critical discussions of the topics covered. The diversity, discrimination, stereotypes and the use of metaphor to propose different interpretations beyond strict disciplinary codes emerged as dimensions that required closer observation and renewed exploration in order to share a meaningful perspective with boys and girls, teachers and parents.

Perhaps influenced by the fantastic scope that fairy tales evoke, a sort of map was developed as the work progressed. It created a point of reference and orientation for the interaction with boys and girls and for the informative and educational relationship with the adults that were particularly important for the children.



Being aware of the project's limitations in terms of time and modalities, as well as the infinite possibilities to address the key themes of the project from a multidisciplinary approach, this map was instrumental to guide the activities under the project. As every map is always different from the territory that it represents⁵⁸, the ambition was certainly not to address the topics in an exhaustive manner or to develop a single model approach, but rather to propose a possible pathway that can be modified and improved in view of the experience made and the perspectives of those who embark on this journey, and to translate problems and challenges related to the topics covered into pedagogical practice.

⁵⁸ Korzybski A. (1994), Science and sanity: an introduction to non-Aristotelian systems and general semantics.

Pedagogical intent and action

The project combined activities addressing the question of gender equality with the objective of engaging children and adults in an educational and self-educational experience.

The development of a comprehensive educational approach could not just involve the “translation” of already defined concepts and contents into technical and didactic methods. On the contrary, as the activities progressed along the project implementation, it became more and more clear that the issues at stake were calling for an in-depth pedagogical reflection and elaboration that could connect any proposal to the children, with the attempt to elaborate paths and responses, with a new approach that still had to be developed.

How would it have been possible to propose to children criteria on what is right and what is wrong with regard to questions of gender discrimination, without resorting to fictitious narratives? How would it have been possible to engage the children in a pedagogical exercise, without recognising that in contemporary reality, the ethical views of adults on these issues differ significantly from facts and behaviours? The fact-based reality is characterised by inequality that structurally involves all dimensions of social life, of the economy, of our history and with them our personal life stories. This simple observation led us to think and design the project activities in such a way as to create a context in which we could address fundamental issues, through a pedagogical approach, that would eventually have a meaning and relevance beyond our initiative.

In this sense, we can say that tackling diversity and gender discrimination has been a challenge not only in creating a useful path for boys and girls but, in particular, in reaffirming an educational process that succeeds to achieve a substantial civil, cultural and ethical engagement. This educational process aimed to target adults who are all confronted with these issues and the problems arising from them, from equal opportunities to gender-based violence.

If we want to understand pedagogy as the discipline dealing with the challenges of education, we have to be aware of and consider how the issues at stake are at the heart of the educational problem. Without recognizing this critical challenge, the very reason for proposing activities of this nature to children is missing.

With regard to the project activities, therefore, a decision was taken to share with the boys and girls a series of problems that concern everyone and to engage them in an experience where they explore and interpret these issues in an interactive way without relying on predetermined responses.

This exercise was prepared in simple and sensitive terms, gradually progressing in accordance with the diversity of the individual learning processes of children in the age group targeted by the project. It aimed to take into consideration the different contexts and origins of each person. This approach corresponds to a central dimension of the project because it requires that the issues at stake be dealt with in an inclusive manner, avoiding stereotype and selective narratives that are not corresponding to reality. The overall objective of this approach was to avoid reproducing the chronic hypocrisy that often characterises the relationship between the world of childhood and the adult world.

Against this background, we can say that the intent and the educational action in relation to the issues at stake were essential and complemented each other. In the following sections of the report, we will illustrate how the project has attempted to translate the orientations described thus far into specific operational modalities.

Fairy tales and narration

The narration of oneself meets traditional narratives to interpret the world between the own and the collective story.

We have already discussed above how Calvino's “holistic” proposal prompted us to consider fairy tales in an open and positive way with regard to all the imaginable propositions that can derive from them. If

it is true that elements of gender discrimination and other types of discrimination can be found in fairy tales, it is equally true that they offer a range of positive cues that provide useful inspiration for a reflection on equal opportunities and inclusion.

In this regard, and certainly in the awareness of all the many useful theories that analyse different aspects of popular narratives, the project preferred to use fairy tales as an opportunity to talk with children about fundamental questions. This should prepare them to gradually and sensitively approach and understand different matters related to the project, while still appreciating the fantastic and magical dimension of many narratives.

It is certainly true that fairy tales offer a good opportunity for talking with children about situations and cases that could not be addressed directly (as for instance the example of children abandoned by their parents, family violence, the imposition of marriage, the power of adults to the point of raw violence and femicide). It is precisely this characteristic that allows children to relate to the fairy tale, and which leaves room for the child to exercise his or her own narration, implicitly or explicitly, and allows us to engage even with adults to a significant degree of freedom of dialectical and philosophical discourse. The metaphorical dimension helps to create additional room for interpretation and for recognition, identification or distancing, which, if handled with sensitivity and attention to the multidimensional nature of learning processes, can generate important contexts for education.

In the specific context of the project, for instance, it was possible to create a realistic experience through dramatic structure and drawing, by dressing up as the one or the other, supported by the imaginary narration of the story, modifying in a natural way individual elements and outcomes of the original text.

It emerged therefore as an important aspect of the method not so much to process one fairy tale in order to tell then yet another, but rather to gently loosen up the fairy tale's network so that new possibilities and new narratives could be generated that go beyond the original text.

In order to keep this possibility alive, an imaginary story was created (the story of the Monkey Island – see section 4) that encompasses, in a metaphorical way, the key issues to be shared with the boys and girls for them to explore the different traditional fairy tales. This approach was chosen in order to avoid an interpretation where the traditional fairy tale is confronted with a realistic and logical account. Instead, another metaphor was chosen that would allow the children to remain within the suggestive and stimulating place of the narration without imposing predetermined messages for the dialogical relationship that was to be developed during the sessions.

In the context of the project, the traditional fairy tales were used in their original versions, which is, in fact, very often radically different from the versions the children know from movies and television. The aim was to develop an approach and a methodology that could facilitate the interaction with the children also in relation to other types of narratives. The methodology, which will be described in detail in the following sections, had not been tested for other contexts, but it had purposefully been developed in such a way that it could also be used for other types of narration.

The biography

The sensitive relationship with the individual history of each person becomes instrumental for understanding the reality and for accessing the complexity of the world.

Is it possible to understand the phenomenon of discrimination and to interact with or on it, without considering our own actions and experiences with regard to discrimination in our life stories? This question guided the dialogue with the teachers in the preliminary phase of the project. The fairy tales, as a place where this can be recognised in an explicit, implicit or symbolic way, have thus become a particularly inspiring context to explore. It is possible to recognise traits of one's own biographical story and narration, supported by each person's sensitivity to the metaphorical dimension.

From the early stages of the project, we felt it was essential to address questions concerning gender discrimination as something that was closely related to the biography of each person but also to a collective biography.

In this sense, in addition to considering how the relationship between the key themes of the project and one's own individual experience enabled a more extensive and substantial understanding, it became clear to us that, in the exchange with children, any direct or indirect interaction with them should always implicitly take their particular and unique life stories into account. In other words, we did not consider it feasible to propose a logic of what is "right or wrong", except in the awareness that any message we shared with them could relate to the biographical contexts and origins of the children with whom we certainly could not interact in any direct way.

Once again, the metaphorical dimension allowed us to develop "third" contexts in a sensible way, supporting an educational potential that could be lived and shared by boys and girls, with due consideration to their own biographical-social-cultural contexts.

For us, this biographical dimension was the essential prerequisite and a safeguard for boys and girls to actively participate in the development of this experience. Through a mirror-like reflection, the biographical approach helped us to encourage the involvement of adults (service providers and teachers) and to enable them to expand the mere didactic activity and to enter into an interlocutory, interrogative, self-educational and circular dimension that we considered essential to establish a sincere and fruitful relationship with children.

The stereotypes

Prejudices are entrenching relations of power and subservience but they are also particularly important subjects and materials for pedagogical action.

We can consider the use of stereotypes as a constant dimension of our way of thinking, where we tend to rely on pre-determined concepts that are not necessarily well founded. The pedagogical question we posed was to consider the mechanisms through which we could succeed to consider our judgements and prejudices with regard to the surrounding reality with flexibility and openness. We decided therefore, not to "demonize" the stereotype as such but rather to understand its nature in order to allow us to disempower it and render it less rigid and inappropriate, with particular attention to gender stereotypes.

We therefore wanted to consider the stereotype as a collective narrative that is closely related with cultural dynamics, which often aim to consolidate relationships of power and subservience. When understood from this perspective, the stereotype can only be determined by real conditions and facts, which tend to express themselves in a common held view, and which, at the same time, reaffirm and reinforce precisely those conditions that determined it in the first place.

In the rationale that was made to prepare the pedagogical paradigm and framework of reference, we noted how, in the case of gender discrimination, the stereotypes within the fairy tales corresponded to historic facts and conditions in the relationship between the sexes and how many of these conditions together with the stereotypes that describe them are still relevant today. If in Snow White, the girl is fully occupied with domestic work, it is evident how this condition limits the opportunities of many women still today. This banal observation certainly lead us to consider the stereotype not as a fictitious narrative but as a deeply rooted structural narrative of today's reality, which still determines the power relations between genders.

We considered then how important it was not to oppose the stereotype with another predetermined truth but that it was instead more appropriate, from the educational point of view, to attempt a possible deconstruction of prejudicial thought through an experience that could disempower the narrative by opening the weaving to other possibilities.

It is also important to note that the traditional fairy tales, unlike the more popular versions that children today are more familiar with and which have been reproduced for commercial purposes with a new interpretation, do promote gender stereotypes without, however, exhausting the wide range of potentials and capabilities attributable to one sex or another. In fact, in popular narratives, we find male and/or female characters who display different types of capabilities that are not necessarily attributable to their gender. An example is the determined solution-oriented capacity of Gretel, Hansel's sister, in the fairy tale of the same name.

In the complexity of factors proposed by fairy tales, we considered it important not to focus so much on the most evident stereotypes proposed by the narration but much rather to identify the conditions that could help to overcome them. Snow White's possibilities, for instance, to display not necessarily the actions attributable to the male characters of the fairy tale, but actions that could expand the range of her possibilities, considering that each individual, male or female, can express their personal identity when he or she faces the opportunities that allow him or her to do so.

From the pedagogical point of view, the aspiration was to exit, with the help of the metaphorical approach, from the rigid male-female opposition and all the specific roles and functions associated with one or the other, and to arrive instead at the category of the “individual”, who is always able to free him- or herself from the stereotypes that condition their existence, or to be liberated from them.

Human rights

The body of rights represents a multidisciplinary educational “logic” to be shared with children and adults.

We considered the body of rights an overall framework of reference for addressing gender discrimination and equal opportunities in a pedagogical way, despite the awareness of its distance from the actual reality of facts. In other words, we assumed that national and international law could legitimately represent the basic reference point for the development of a sound and solid pedagogical experience for children and teachers.

The “relativistic” view of the issues at stake, recognising the opportunity to express the own identity without any constraints imposed by cultural and social constructs, emerged precisely from the principles and norms deriving from the body of international human rights law, as a cultural heritage of humanity and therefore a basic reference point for any analysis and proposal aimed at guaranteeing the dignity and possibilities of every person.

We wanted to understand the normative framework as a synthesis and a platform on which to create a multidisciplinary perspective that could be translated into an educational paradigm. In this sense, and using metaphorical language to ease the relationship with the children, the intention was to progress from a logic based exclusively on the recognition of the child's needs to an understanding where needs are connected and interrelated with the corresponding rights. From this perspective, the possibilities of a person result from the standards afforded under international human rights law and the supportive environment required to enable the person to exercise these rights.

Several treaties and conventions elaborate on the general principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights specifically in relation to gender issues, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Together with an approach rooted in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), these instruments of international law have provided orientation for the horizon of values for the activities and guided the paths that we felt we could follow and translate, sometimes even explicitly, in our experience with children and teachers.

The story/metaphor of Monkey Island (see section 4) allowed us to represent, in a child-friendly way, and sensibly compared to the universe of the fairy tales that we were going to explore, a utopian world. This aimed at demonstrating a culture based on rights, understood as the basis of relationships

between individuals and always respectful of each person's possibility to express themselves and their stories.

The EIGE indicators as “determinants”

The effects of gender discrimination and the absence of equal opportunities become manifest, clearly and in a structural way, in all aspects of today's world.

Speaking of gender discrimination and equal opportunities, we felt it was extremely important to link the issues addressed to a reality that is still a long way from full recognition of the law. While addressing the issue through metaphors and fairy tales, it would not have been possible to develop a pedagogical paradigm without considering the facts that around the world show a disparity between legal guarantees and actual treatment related to gender.

Against this background, as already discussed above, we considered the EIGE indicators of gender equality as particularly useful in light of the approach chosen for the activities. The indicators could sustain a complex fact-based analysis that is helpful for teacher training and, at the same time, could be translated into areas and concepts that can be shared with children and guide the joint analysis of the narratives. We have thus proposed a series of “determinants” that reflect the EIGE indicators in order to address together with the children all the related dimensions of gender discrimination, including those of structural nature.

Work, money (in the workshops with children, this was translated in resources), knowledge, time, power, health and, in addition, the cross-cutting parameter of violence/protection, have thus become the foundation for the pedagogical proposal and the approach to dealing with stereotypes. Working with this approach requires us to recognise what has determined and continues to determine these dimensions.

The use of these “determinants” has made it possible to interact with the children without pushing them to engage in an open discourse that took on a particular meaning precisely because it was accompanied by fairy-tale metaphors. At the same time, the use of the EIGE indicators made it possible to synthesise the topics dealt with by proposing an additional simple map to guide the exploration of these complex themes.

3. METHODOLOGY AND MODULE ADAPTING

The first exploratory phase with children, teachers and parents during spring 2019 allowed us to focus and refine the questions posed by the Fairy Tales project, in particular the following:

1. Is it possible to formulate a hypothesis of education for equality and the recognition of gender stereotypes with children aged 5-7 years, through a critical reading of the traditional European fairy tales?
2. What theoretical reference points and pedagogical tools are needed to develop a proposal that is understandable, effective and non-invasive?
3. Which approach should be prioritised – working with children to raise their awareness and sensitise them to the problems related to the social inequality between genders or the search and appreciation of autonomous, equal, supportive and respectful behaviours (by male and female characters and in their relationships) that we were discovering in the original versions of the fairy tales, trying to propose possible new types of relationships between girls and boys?

During the first phase of the project, we identified possible risks to the project implementation. These related especially to the generic nature of the project, the young age of the boys and girls we were interacting with and the different national situations and contexts of the three partners, as well as the heterogeneous social and geographical composition of the classes involved in the activities (which may, however, reflect the situation in Italy).

A first identified risk was related to time: The project by its nature imposed a short and tight framework for the activities. As we know, however, children need to take their time. The time required to participate actively and to understand the communications coming from adults, especially those of a theoretical and abstract nature, can vary a lot from person to person and can be different from child to child. The risk was to enter in a dialogue only with some children and not being able to reach them all.

The second risk was that of not involving the adults who were important persons of reference for the children and appreciating their roles and engagement, especially teachers, who were the only ones able to sustain the essence of the workshops when engaging with the children in the classrooms. In light of this challenge, it is proposed that future experiences put the training of adults first, prior to the experiential workshops with children.

The greatest risk was that of failing to find the right language and ways to convey to children the rich and articulated framework that had been identified (beyond the gender-specific issues, the general framework of human rights and the EIGE indicators, among others). The risk was to propose and impose on children adult views, judgments and concepts, in a top-down manner, without taking into account and without respecting family, social, religious and cultural differences, rather than sharing them through a joint experience.

For these reasons, and referring to the Italian school of thought and pedagogical research that have inspired over time many innovative practices⁵⁹, the decision was made to set up the experiential workshops according to some key points:

With regard to the children:

Prioritising their points of view, starting from the assumption, shared with them in words and actions, that people are all the same, with different characteristics and abilities, but each one unique and precious, worthy of being seen, heard and considered without ever being offended, silenced, ignored, or judged. To translate this understanding in real behaviour, the adults, who are steering the situation, must always observe the children, listen to them and give them the floor and visibility as often as necessary, valuing the sharing of ideas, even different ones, without giving definitive judgments and giving everyone time to modify and mature their own ideas.

Body, sensations and emotions: children (as well as adults) live, understand, feel and learn through the body: the body-mind. Very often, however, the children's minds are addressed, whereas the body is neglected and ignored. In the workshops, we tried to pay the utmost attention to spaces, lights, music, objects, materials, postures, games and the alternation of quiet calmness and movement, proposing, without saying it explicitly with words, a playful and non-judgmental dimension that children are able to recognize immediately and inhabit naturally, in an indispensable condition of well-being.

Narration and symbolic play, at this age, are the most immediate tools to "speak" one's thoughts, making them alive and experiencing them with the body and emotionality in "we pretend we are..." exercises. Images and realistic activities are the most powerful language, at this age, to anchor the experience in the memory.

With regard to the fairy tales:

A first risk was to work with traditional fairy tales, without considering, which fairy tales children know today, in which versions and forms they are proposed to them and, above all, which are the fairy tales of the present that are part of their imaginary world. This, in our opinion, could lead us to uncritically replace old stereotypes with new ones. Some recent Disney versions of traditional fairy tales, for instance, were produced rather in response to mainstream receptivity than to really promote equal and friendly relationships between genders, in mutual respect where we progress from the idea of fragile and powerless princesses and princes with their resolute kisses, quarrelsome, cynical female

⁵⁹ We refer in particular to an intercultural pedagogy, not authoritarian, listening rather than "filling" the child, from Montessori to don Milani, Danilo Dolci, Gianni Rodari, Loris Malaguzzi, Lorenzoni, Affinati, Moreno (see bibliographical proposals).

heroes who are always alarmed and rough, funny and inconclusive males. Some of the boys who participated in the activities were so bright to reject these movies as they thought they were “movies for females that only the girls liked”.

A second risk was the temptation to discard the traditional fairy tales too easily, without knowing, studying or using the “old” fairy tales and legends of our tradition, which in fact represent the cultural foundations on which all subsequent and current narratives rest.

We decided therefore together with the project team to work with the original versions of fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm and Perrault. We preferred to immerse ourselves in the texts without preconceptions, with “innocent” ears, and we discovered, together with the boys and girls, not only violence, injustice and abandonment but also treasures of intelligence, generosity, honesty, courage and resilience on the part of the young protagonists, and often also of the male characters, princes or not. It is not surprising that Propp, Calvino, Bettelheim, Zipes and others have explained how the fairy tales constitute an immense human patrimony of oral, popular and cultured wisdom, an archive of human cases in which to find oneself, tools to appreciate, console and support the most fragile persons, girls, children, those who are “different” and poor, struggling with the difficulties of life; they also convey continuous messages warning against behaviours judged unworthy and dangerous: in short, a synthesis and summary of human destinies.

We felt that this reflection could make an important contribution to the project. It was therefore decided to develop a parallel working structure to what was proposed by the partners, while maintaining the same objectives and aims, focusing the work on the positive aspects of fairy tales and, in particular, in addition to strengthening the children's capability to recognize and reject gender stereotypes, stimulating their ability to read and interpret the events of the stories without ideological preconceptions, but with attention to the possible motivations and results of individual behaviour; and to discuss them together.

We believe that we have responded in this way to the aims of the project, in particular the aim to encourage from a very early age the creation of situations of friendly and respectful cohabitation and interaction between different people (in terms of gender, age, physical characteristics, geographical origin, different abilities, skills and disabilities, social conditions...), inviting and supporting teachers to conceive and practice in everyday school life a sort of permanent education to feelings, along with a growth of knowledge and defence of their own and others' rights.

4. WORKING WITH CHILDREN – EXPERIENCE AND LESSONS LEARNED

In light of the overall objectives of the project, the working methods were selected with due consideration to the joint elaboration of meanings. The methodology aimed to foster the children's intellectual development, supporting spontaneous exploration and encouraging the children to form their own opinions with regard to behaviour and points of view, free from pre-determined normative frameworks or manipulation.

The aspiration was to stimulate the children's own exploration and research through playful and non-judgmental approaches. The children were encouraged to listen to each other and to reflect together. Each child was given the time that he or she needed in order to develop their own ideas and they learned to accept that there are different positions and statements. Through this exercise, the children started to open up and felt at ease about sharing stories from their personal and family lives and school situations. To facilitate this process, the workshops were organized in an enabling environment that differed from the typical classroom setting. The girls and boys were welcomed in a warm and informal atmosphere that aimed to stimulate curiosity, dialogue and interaction in a setting characterized by trust and wellbeing. In addition, the choice of lights, objects and materials in the meeting room helped to distinguish the setting from the classroom and to inspire a different attitude where children can explore their evolving capacities.

The first phase of the project was implemented from September 2018 to July 2019. It had the

objective to gather perspectives and perceptions about gender stereotypes of girls, boys and teachers, by engaging them in the narration of traditional fairy tales. The aspects that emerged from this exercise would then inform the development of an educational path for children, the practical guide for teachers and the training cycles to be proposed in the subsequent phases of the project implementation.

In order to decide, which fairy tales to work with, a first survey was conducted among the children. They received a chart representing the images of 16 traditional fairy tales and were asked to vote by applying stickers on the fairy tales they preferred.

Subsequently, after proposing the overall path of the activities to the children, ascertaining their interest to participate in the activities and agreeing on a sort of “pact”, the consultations began in the form of workshops.

The 44 children involved were divided into four sub-groups that worked each on four fairy tales (The Cat in Boots, Sleeping Beauty in the Woods, Rapunzel and Bluebeard) over three sessions of about 2 hours each.

The path was documented through photo-video support, which was then edited in a short documentary and presented to families towards the end of the school year (June 2019), taking the opportunity to discuss the results of the sessions.

In parallel, three focus groups were conducted with teachers and educators. During each session, three selected fairy tales were discussed from different angles, with the aim of exploring the field generated by the story, the possible reference to the determinants proposed, the perception of stereotypes in relation to each participant's biographical and professional experience. These moments were also an opportunity to share in a circular way the work undertaken and the findings that emerged from the workshops with the children.

The second part of the project involved the same boys and girls of the previous year, now in the second grade, who enthusiastically expressed their interest in participating in the new cycle of activities through a renewal of the “pact”.

The activities carried out in this project phase had a stronger educational intention and had the objective of informing and guiding the development of educational activities aimed at accompanying boys and girls in the development of friendly and respectful relationships with their peers, raising their awareness and taking on a critical attitude towards gender stereotypes.

In order to convey the complexity of the project's contents to people of this age, it was decided to engage them on a narrative and playful level: a metaphor in the form of a story was therefore developed to represent the key elements that were to be explored together, in particular the EIGE indicators, access to equal rights and equal opportunities, the value and uniqueness of each individual person, the equality in difference, which is always considered as a value. The story entitled “Monkey Island” was proposed to the children as a useful lens to analyse later on the various traditional fairy tales with which they would work, and also to encourage discussion and shared reflection between the children and adults on the issues addressed.

Each sub-group of about 10-15 children worked on three fairy tales during four sessions of two hours each. The first meeting was dedicated to exploring together the metaphor of Monkey Island in order to understand the orientation that it implies. The story was read out and analysed together with the help of different images (in particular Japanese watercolours), objects (monkey puppets) and drawings (during the reading of the story, a co-facilitator developed a drawing on a cardboard so that the image of a large island gradually took shape). The exchange was guided by a few questions, formulated ad hoc, to bring out the EIGE indicators, which were then graphically simplified on seven little flags. The story of Monkey Island was experimented and experienced through games involving physical activities and it was memorized through a drawing activity. The drawings produced by the

children were collected, cut out and then used to compile the “Librone della Memoria”, the big book of memories, of the journey undertaken together, to be handed over to the class at the end of the activities.

During the following three meetings, the three fairy tales were read and discussed together: Little Red Riding Hood, Hansel and Gretel and Snow White.

At the beginning of each session, the children's attention was directed back to the story of Monkey Island, which became the starting point for the subsequent discussion and interpretation of a traditional fairy tale. The children were encouraged to participate actively in the dialogue through the joint creation of the EIGE indicator flags (and choosing the terms to describe them) and the guiding questions, focusing the discussion on the elements identified in the fairy tales – such as social roles, work, decision-making, health, violence and protection. The method used aimed to welcome the children's point of view in discussions without making judgements. After the discussion, moments of symbolic play were proposed that were oriented at the events of the fairy tales in order to experience in a very concrete way respect, delicacy, solidarity, care and body contact regardless of gender, age, social position of the characters or the children. Despite the fact that in these activities there was also resistance on the part of the boys to represent female roles, after some encouragement and role corrections (e.g. the grandmother became a grandfather), the difficulties were eased. In the final meeting, each and everyone took turns to perform Snow White being fast asleep and cared for by the dwarfs. The sessions always ended with a proposal involving drawing and graphs and using specific techniques that are barely used at school and therefore allowed the children to experiment new ways of expression.

In the closing session, the children handed over the “Librone della Memoria”, the big book of memories, which included the drawings and compositions that were a trace of the journey they had undertaken together, as well as the story of Monkey Island, a child-friendly version of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the little flags with the EIGE indicators that had guided the discussion of the fairy tales, as well as a paper garland (one of those that used to be hand made with scissors in the past) of many little figures, men and women, of different colours and shapes to symbolize humanity, all the same and yet all different.

In the application is a schematic structure of the workshops with children that were held between November 2019 and February 2020.

5. KEY CONCLUSIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

The activities carried out, as described above, have generated an important opportunity to translate the challenging pedagogical reflection in a direct experimentation together with the children. In this sense, the theoretical and practical orientations that result from this initiative were developed together, in an engaging relationship, by adults and children.

In order to demonstrate how questions concerning gender discrimination persist in our contemporary reality and are of a structural nature, it has to be underlined that almost all adults participating in the activities in Italy were women. Also in this case, we want to consider this aspect not so much as a limitation of the project but as a useful opportunity to affirm that the voices of women are a fundamental requirement in directing the debate on the issues addressed.

We are certain that the project, in its national and transnational dimensions, has opened up an important path to contribute to the full recognition of equal opportunities also in the educational and didactic field. We express our gratitude to all those, adults and children, who have made themselves available to enter the metaphorical world of fairy tales in order to recognize the important potential it offers for the difficult path leading towards the recognition of the dignity and the possibility of each individual to express his or her own story and their own peculiar identity in a narration that involves us all.

II. GREECE

1. POLICIES, PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

In Greece, the principle of equal treatment and gender equality is established by the 1975 Constitution. In particular, Article 4, paragraph 1 sets out a general principle of equality "Greeks are equal before the law". This constitutional principle is supplemented with regard to the relations of the two sexes in paragraph 2 of the same article as follows: "Greeks have equal rights and obligations." The revision of the 2001 Constitution incorporated a new wording, (Article 116 par. 2) which states "It is not discrimination on grounds of gender to take positive measures to promote equality between men and women. The state takes care to eliminate the inequalities that exist in practice, especially to the detriment of women".

Article 16 of the 1975 Constitution establishes equality in the right to free education, at all levels of education for all nationals, regardless of gender. Moreover, "art and science, research and teaching are free, and their development and promotion is an obligation of the state."

The principle of gender equality was established by the 1975 Constitution, but with the country's entry into the EEC and especially during the period 1981-1989, it was founded with laws aimed at eliminating discrimination against women in all areas of social life. Laws on family, education, employment and social security were passed. Law 1286/82 abolished the last distinctions at the legislative level between students as well as the teaching staff⁶⁰. Law 1329/83 modernized Family Law and adapted it to the constitutional requirement of the principle of gender equality. According to this law the following was abolished: the concept of the patriarchal family in which the man was the head of the family, and decided on everything related to marital life and was replaced by the family of equality in which man and woman decide on all matters of their marital and family life.

By law **N.1342 / 1983 (Government Gazette 39 / A / 1983)**, the UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was ratified without any reservation. The CEDAW Convention is recognized by international law and the governments of the countries that have ratified it are committed to implementing its articles⁶¹.

In 1985, Law 1558/85 established the General Secretariat for Equality (GGI) as a competent public service for the promotion of formal and substantive equality between men and women in all sectors - political, social, economic and cultural- and to this day remains the governing body responsible for gender equality issues. In 1989 with Law 1835/89 initially and then with Law 2266/94, the Equality Research Center (KETHI) was founded in Athens and operates to this day. At the regional level, the prefectural organization of equality mechanisms was created, which includes the Prefectural Equality Committees with representatives of state, local bodies and women's organizations and the Prefectural Equality Offices for the better information of the citizens. Finally, in 2000, 13 Regional Equality Committees were established at the Regional level, chaired by the Secretary General of the Region⁶².

From 1995 onwards, gender equality policy was gradually extended to a wide range of public policy areas as articulated at the UN Conference on Women in Action (1995). These include tackling gender-based violence and participating in decision-making centers, areas that have been constant priorities of public policy equality in Greece to date⁶³.

⁶⁰ https://www.ekdd.gr/ekdda/files/ergasies_esdd/12/2/339.pdf

⁶¹ https://www.kethi.gr/sites/default/files/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/CEDAW_Web_Spreads-1.pdf

⁶² Stratigaki Maria, "Gender Equality Policies in the Labor Market in the European Union and Greece", in "Gender and New Professions" of EPPEAEK II 2000-2006 "Production of Auxiliary educational material for the introduction of gender issues in the educational process", 2007, available here: <https://repository.edulll.gr/edulll/retrieve/5002/1425.pdf>

⁶³ Stratigaki Maria, "Gender equality policy in the vortex of the economic crisis" in the Hellenic Review of Political Science, issue 41, December 2013. Available here: <https://ejournals.epublishing.ekt.gr/index.php/hpsa/article/view/14536>

Promoting Equality between men and women in economic life

According to the Constitution of Greece, **Article 22**, paragraph 1, "All employees, regardless of gender or other discrimination, have the right to equal pay for work of equal value." The Law 3896/2010 ratifies the constitutional principle and it is the law that ensures gender equality in labor relations - the law codified in a single text the legislation in force until then. The concepts of direct and indirect discrimination are clarified, the concept of prohibited discrimination is expanded, it includes the concepts of sexual harassment and harassment due to gender, it strengthens the position of the pregnant woman and the mother.

Article 4 (1) imposes equal pay for equal work or work of equal value. Other issues it regulates are the equal treatment in occupational social security systems, the equal treatment in relation to access to employment in professional development and training and working conditions. The ombudsman, who is obliged to cooperate with the Labor Inspection Body and the General Secretariat for Gender Equality, is a monitoring body for the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment.

For the balanced participation of the two sexes in the decision-making process, the Greek Parliament passed a legislative provision, Law 2839/2000, Article 6, according to which the balanced participation of men and women in the decision-making process in the State, in the PUBLIC LEGAL ENTITY, PRIVATE LEGAL ENTITY as well as in the local authorities of the first and second degree is sought.

Measures - actions to address violence against women

The Istanbul Convention is the most comprehensive international human rights treaty on violence against women and domestic violence. Greece signed the Istanbul Convention in May 2011 and ratified it in April 2018. The treaty entered into force in October 2018, with law 4531/2018⁶⁴. The Convention is important because it recognizes that women and girls are at higher risk of violence than men, recognizes in practice and in law gender equality (de facto & de jure) and condemns all forms of violence against women and children, like any form of gender-based violence. The Convention provides for the coordination and cooperation of the following competent bodies: the judiciary, the police, local and regional authorities, organizations for the protection and support of victims and witnesses. The implementation of the Convention by the states that have ratified it is monitored by the team of independent experts GREVIO and the first evaluation of the country is expected to be completed in 2023.

With Law 4604/2019, the first part of which is entitled "Promoting substantial gender equality, prevention and combating gender-based violence" (articles 1-30), an independent institutional framework for gender equality and the elimination of discrimination against women is enacted, for the first time, which is governed by a comprehensive view of gender relations and without treating women as a "special category", as in the case of today provisions and regulations of family and labor law, social security law, Community directives and international treaties, which our country has ratified or defined by our Constitution. It identifies the basic concepts, mechanisms and bodies for the implementation of the principle of equal treatment of the sexes, the integration of this principle in public policies and in private life, as well as the formation and organization of a network of permanent structures, by the country, with the object of preventing and tackling violence against women. For this purpose, the operation of an integrated Network of structures and services is envisaged with the object of offering psychosocial support, legal counseling, but also safe accommodation to women victims of gender-based violence. These are the structures that constitute the network of the General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality, the Women's Counseling Centers, the Shelters for

⁶⁴ http://www.ministryofjustice.gr/site/Portals/0/uploaded_files/uploaded_25/4531.pdf
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/about-the-convention>

women survivors of violence, the 24-hour nationwide telephone line SOS 15900. In addition, the Independent Offices are established in the KEDE and ENPE, the Equality Committees in the Municipalities and the Regional Equality Committees are upgraded.

The NAPGE, National Action Plan for Gender Equality, includes a series of horizontal interventions across the range of public policy and vertical specialist policies aimed at women and men in areas where inequalities are identified. The combination of the two directions in the interventions follows the strategy for the promotion of gender equality, as established in 1995 at the UN Beijing Platform and the European Commission Communication on Gender Mainstreaming.

The priority axes of the NAPGE follow the guidelines of the European Commission to the Member States, adapting to the specific circumstances of Greece and concern the following policy areas:

- Social inclusion and equal treatment of women who are subject to multiple discrimination
- Gender-based violence
- Labor market and harmonization of family and professional life
- Education, training, culture, sports and media
- Health
- Decision making centers⁶⁵

The most recent development in the field of legislation is the enactment of Law 4491/2017 (Government Gazette A '152 / 13.10.2017) "Legal recognition of gender identity - National Mechanism for the Preparation, Monitoring and Evaluation of Action Plans for the Rights of the Child and other provisions", which provides transgender people with the right to have their gender identity recognized as an element of their personality and the right to respect for their personality based on their gender characteristics. In 2016, Law 4443/2016 (Government Gazette A'232 / 9.12.2016) incorporates - among others, the Directives 2000/43 / EC on the application of the principle of equal treatment of persons regardless of their racial or ethnic origin, and 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, strengthening the national institutional framework for equal treatment, replacing Law 3304/2005 (Government Gazette 16 / A / 27-01-2005) "Application of the principle of equal treatment regardless of racial or ethnic origin, religion or other beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation" and reinforcing pre-existing provisions of other relevant Laws¹⁷. Article 2 of the Law includes definitions for concepts such as: "direct discrimination" ¹⁸, "indirect discrimination" ¹⁹, "harassment" ²⁰, "discrimination due to relationship" ²¹, "discrimination due to alleged characteristics" ²², "multiple discrimination" ²³. a. According to this Law, the principle of equal treatment regardless of race, color, national or ethnic origin, pedigree, religious or other beliefs, disability or chronic illness, age, family or social status.

The promotion of gender equality is not an issue that concerns only women: it concerns both men and society in all its forms and touches every aspect of our lives. Gender equality can be the starting point for progress, pluralism and democracy, by building equal cooperation between men and women. The legal framework that exists today in Greece is considered one of the most advanced. But it is not enough on its own to solve problems and ensure gender equality. Gender discrimination in society shows that gender equality has not yet been achieved. It is therefore necessary to integrate the gender dimension in all policies and the implementation of special measures or positive actions for prevention.

With the Presidential Decree 3 / 6-1-2021, "Article 2 - Renaming of the General Secretariat of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs", the General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality of par. 3 of article 7 of p.d. 84/2019 (A '123) is renamed to General Secretariat of Demographic and Family Policy and Gender Equality and the corresponding position of General Secretary of Family Policy and Gender Equality to position of General Secretary of Demographic and Family Policy and Gender Equality, with whatever consequences this may have in the future.

⁶⁵ <https://www.isotita.gr/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/ESDIF.pdf>

2. TRAINING MODULES: THE NATIONAL EXPERIENCE

In Greece, in 1979, the procedures for the institutionalization of mixed education began, which, however, was finalized in 1985 (Law 1566/85), with the formal recognition that pure girls' and boys' schools reproduce educational inequality between the sexes.

Gender stereotypes, that is, the stereotypes of the sexes and their roles, contain various characteristics for the ways in which individuals think and express themselves, act and feel or dress. They also contain characteristics for the roles and profession they follow, depending on their division into "women" and "men". Essentially, these are preconceived ideas or representations that attribute in a simplified way properties to individuals, properties that determine their behavior or reactions, e.g. "Men do not cry", or "girls are sensitive and coquettish". Stereotypes do not remain the same nor are they the same all over the world. They change depending on the historical, social, political and economic conditions. Despite the significant changes that have taken place in recent years in the relations between the two sexes, these stereotypes still exist today and affect people's perceptions. Stereotypical ideas about "masculine" and "feminine" qualities consider these human characteristics to be innate.

Related research⁶⁶ conclude that educational practices influence the development of educational inequalities by gender and can encourage and perpetuate prejudices about gender discrimination. In the school curriculum, gender equality is not a separate learning unit. In recent decades, through the cooperation of University Institutions or other State Authorities, efforts have been made to produce supportive educational material to introduce gender issues in the educational process. Material that is developmentally appropriate for the age of the child and can be used by teachers of the respective levels of education. Indicatively we will be referred to the material created by the University of Ioannina, material that includes theoretical and practical information addressed to kindergarten teachers and teachers⁶⁷. The Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) of the Ministry of Education and Religions, in the school year 2016-2017, inaugurated the institution of "Thematic Week", with aimed at informing and raising awareness of members of the school community (students, teachers, parents) in various thematic fields. One of the axes was the field "Gender Identities", where actions could be implemented on issues related to gender equality, prevention of gender-based violence, gender stereotypes, etc. But none of the above is part of the compulsory teaching time and their implementation is left to the will of the sensitized teachers. In the Kindergarten the actions can be integrated in a work plan, in the Primary School in the framework of the Flexible Zone and in the Secondary Education in the implementation of a project.

The **Fairy Tales project** proposes actions targeting young children, teachers, parents and the general public, to promote gender equality, to prevent gender-based violence. The suggested practices can be incorporated into the pedagogical practice, to reconstruct gender stereotypes, while at the same time encouraging young children to build healthy relationships based on appreciation and respect. The novelty of the Fairy Tales project to introduce the theme of equal opportunities for women and men in Primary Education, (preschool age - Kindergarten and in the first grades of Primary School), is that it uses classic children's fairy tales, popular with children aged 5-7 years which are a factor in shaping their beliefs and attitudes about life.

The teaching modules developed in the context of the Fairy Tales project, as a tool for the development of critical and creative thinking, promote prevention against violence and discrimination as the key tool for promoting gender equality. Within the framework of the project, actions are proposed that have as main messages to the children:

- Women and men, girls and boys are equally capable and their knowledge equally valuable

⁶⁶ <https://repository.edulll.gr/edulll/handle/10795/1490> https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332246303_0_paragontas_phylo_kai_e_scholike_pragmatikoteta_sten_protobathmia_kai_deutrobathmia_ekpaideuse_Melete_episkopeses

⁶⁷ University of Ioannina, Department of Philosophy of Pedagogical Psychology, Department of Pedagogy <http://www.isotita-epeaek.gr/welcome.htm>

- Women and men, girls and boys are different, but this is a reason for cooperation and not a reason for discrimination
- Every person is unique, different and precious!
- Every child is unique, different and precious!
- The control, submission and enforcement of one sex to the other is not acceptable and leads to violence.
- It is important for women and men to be equally involved in the care of their home and family and to have equal time for themselves.
- Women and men should be paid equally for the same work.
- There are good and bad strangers, we consult with parents before we trust them.
- When girls and boys are equally involved in decision making, nobody will be at a disadvantage.
- Children, women and men have the right to live without violence and to have equal opportunities to realize their personal desires.
- Children and women are more vulnerable groups and more often become victims of violence and based on this fact special protection and support is required.

The institutional framework governing the operation of Primary Education, and in particular of the Kindergarten, the elaboration of issues and the implementation of work plans emphasizes the collaborative learning⁶⁸. The methodology for the implementation of the activities of the teaching units of the project is close to those used in kindergartens, both in terms of the structure of the content and the duration of the implementation of the activity. This also allows the smooth introduction of activities in the context of existing pedagogical practices. The use of fairy tales as a basic material for working with children, gives children space to express themselves through a familiar environment, to develop and enrich their speech, to process the social roles of both sexes, to perceive stereotypical or non-stereotypical images, to talk about violence and abuse. The symbolic character of the fairy tale, which participates in the actions, provides the child with the necessary distance from the topic of discussion, as the activity is realized using the story of the characters of the fairy tale and not the personal experiences of the children. Knowledge is built through interaction with the natural and social environment and contributes to the formation of a healthy personality and an active citizen are two of the main goals of preschool education in Greece.

An important part of the Fairy Tales project, in addition to working with children, is the active involvement of kindergarten teachers and parents. The project envisages the training and awareness of kindergarten teachers and parents on issues of gender equality, stereotypes and prevention of gender-based violence. In this way it provides a holistic approach to the issue, as it includes in the implementation of the actions the main actors of the socialization of the child in terms of gender: the family and the Kindergarten.

Education, as an institution of socialization of the individual, must promote and contribute to the achievement of gender equality, to raise awareness and prevent violence based on gender or gender segregation. The teaching modules of the project for working with preschool children, strengthen the effort of teachers and / or parents regarding the building of healthy relationships based on appreciation and respect for the opposite sex, from an early age.

⁶⁸ http://iep.edu.gr/images/IEP/EPISTIMONIKI_YPIRESIA/Epist_Monades/A_Kykos/Proshol_Agogi_nea/2019/meros_1_paidagogiko_plaisio.pdf

3. METHODOLOGY AND MODULE ADAPTING

The first contact with the stereotypes of classic fairy tales took place in early 2019, after the fairy tales had been selected. Two working groups, one consisting of children aged 5-7 and one of the primary school teachers, identified, deconstructed and reconstructed the stereotypes. The material of these groups formed the basis of the teaching modules developed for working with young children, on the subject of preventing gender-based violence as well as promoting gender equality.

The teaching units and activities that have been developed, have the symbolic meaning of the fairy tale and its heroes, as a starting point, but they are the occasion for the development of conditions for creating the right terms and conditions, in order to facilitate the young children in the search and multiple solutions, to questions / problems that arise during the educational process, especially if we take care to enrich it with elements of everyday life. In this context, the indicators for gender equality of the European Institute for Gender Equality - EIGE provided the "material" for the elements of everyday life. The promotion of gender equality is done through activities related to education, health, work, pay, leisure, participation in decision-making - these are the indicators for gender equality of the EIGE.

The first implementation of the teaching units started in 2020 in Karditsa. The group of children included children aged 5 to 7 years, boys and girls. The implementation of the activities includes interactive working methods, such as brainstorming, role-playing games, reading fairy tales, group discussions, etc., but also visual material, such as pictures of the main characters, models, presentations, stickers, dolls, etc. The working methods were chosen in order to expand the possibilities of children for creative and critical thinking. The innovation of the approach of the activities through the fairy tale and its heroes creates a learning environment that is a source of stimuli and experiences, promotes their natural tendency for experimentation and exploration and encourages initiative, responsibility expression of ideas and the co-construction⁶⁹, of meanings. Discussions and working in small or large groups helped the children:

- ✓ to act responsibly and autonomously, to take initiatives, to support their choices, thus building their personal identity,
- ✓ to dare to try in the security provided by the game and the symbolic reason of the fairy tale,
- ✓ to ask questions and pose problems,
- ✓ to develop strategies to solve problems,
- ✓ to creatively apply their knowledge in new situations.

This method has helped children discover characteristics of the world around them that relate to gender equality and prevention against gender-based violence. By playing, they share and negotiate different social experiences, such as trying out everyday roles of people familiar to them, exploring ideas, topics and events that impress and arouse their curiosity, conducting explorations that start from their own interests and questions, all that helps children become more autonomous in their thinking.

Understanding the concept of gender equality was either direct, through storytelling, or indirect, using a language that makes both sexes visible. Representations also contributed to this goal, as well as the strong description of the positive side of the best life of all, when men and women work, create, decide together, live with equality.

Children participated in groups and activities equally, they were encouraged to think outside the gender stereotypes without fear of being ridiculed or rejected, which ensured the promotion of equality, justice and active participation in the educational process.

⁶⁹ As a teaching strategy, co-construction refers to the process by which a teacher and children, together, create meaning and gain knowledge about the world.

The role of the teacher/coordinator is crucial for the implementation of the teaching modules. He is the person who creates the right atmosphere of trust and respect for the group experience and "educates" the participating children to be members of the team. Adaptability, ingenuity, respect for the other child, and the personality of the teacher/coordinator in relation to the dynamics of the team, is the key point in the effort to implement the activities.

The pilot application was made in a Kindergarten of the city, by a Kindergarten teacher member of the initial group of teachers, with the aim of initially evaluating the application of the given educational modules and then the wider application of these modules by the rest of the group of teachers that formed the initial working group, the original focus group. The pilot application is a fact that provided a very important experience in the implementation of the activities by the rest of the group of teachers.

Children are by nature curious about the natural and social environment. In order to utilize and strengthen their willingness to explore and learn the material of the program, he arrived at the Kindergarten in a beautiful box, which contained, among other things, gifts for each child: the hat that allows us to talk, stickers and the storybook.

The activities proposed are group. This is because teamwork can be fun, enjoyable, but at the same time gives children the opportunity to work together, cultivate their self-esteem and confidence, develop skills, build close relationships and lay the foundations for a community that is interested, shares and supports. Team work promotes collaborative learning and a flexible team allows children to see themselves working in many different contexts, with different conditions each time, but also on different projects.

The activities are addressed to preschool children who attend Kindergarten and the first grades of Primary School (5-7 years old) and are indicative. The teacher can modify them according to the dynamics of his/her class, but without changing the goal given at the beginning (field: Objective of the activity). The activities are implemented in the given sequence and it is legitimate to start after the children have met each other and have started to "bond" as a group.

Teaching modules with a large volume of activities were implemented in two or three meetings, depending on the capabilities and interests of the group and the judgment of the kindergarten teacher who recognizes and respects the diversity of each child, i.e. personality, skills, ways of expression and communication, cultural heritage and highlights it in a positive way, ie it facilitates each child to recognize his own characteristics, but also of the other children in the group. Before starting the activities, the children are presented with the materials that will be used, so that they become familiar with them and their attention is not distracted along the way.

The teacher was given the opportunity in the interval between the activities - in order to avoid discontinuity between the modules - based on the fairy tale of the module, to use some activities that are fun and interesting for the children. For our fairy tales, techniques from the "Drama Process" and others such as the use of paintings were chosen. We must point out that the techniques used are not "a complete drama". Indicative: "Role on the wall", "In the hero's room", "Mark the moment". In the Appendix are presented indicative exercises for strengthening relationships for work in groups of children, as well as some techniques that the teacher can use as an introductory way of approaching fairy tales in general.

Through this formulation of the methodology for the implementation of the teaching modules we tried to achieve specific goals, inherent in the Pedagogical Framework and the Principles of the Curriculum for the Kindergarten⁷⁰, objectives such as:

- the strengthening of children's self-perception and autonomy, by creating conditions and situations of equal and selfless communication between them

⁷⁰ http://iep.edu.gr/images/IEP/EPISTIMONIKI_YPIRESIA/Epist_Monades/A_Kyklos/Proshol_Agogi_nea/2019/meros_1_paidagogiko_plaisio.pdf

- the equal and unhindered participation of all children, regardless of gender or origin, in the implementation of activities while eliminating inequalities
- the weakening of categorizations, prejudices and stereotypes, which may hinder the acceptance of people with different characteristics
- introducing the issue of equal opportunities for boys and girls, for women and men in the sphere of family, social and professional life

The purpose of the teaching modules of the work plan is the acquisition by students of skills such as:

- Cooperation with all their classmates and mutual support in the implementation of joint actions
- Enhancing self-knowledge and self-confidence that will lead to the construction of personal identity
- Limiting the fear and insecurity that stems from the concept of the different
- Practicing in situations that require the exchange and acceptance of different views

and the adoption and acceptance of attitudes and values such as:

- Tolerance and respect for the different
- Understanding uniqueness
- Participation
- Equality

The project also provides for the participation of parents in the process. This collaboration with the family and consequently the connection of the project with the community contributes to the learning of the children and helps them to become more aware of the historical, cultural and social context through which the classic children have emerged and spread.

Fairy tales offer symbolic solutions to these problems, allowing children to come into contact with their "dangerous" emotions in a safe and constructive way.

4. WORKING WITH CHILDREN - EXPERIENCE AND LESSONS LEARNT

Children through their family, the dominant body of socialization, acquire their gender identity through the imitation of living beings such as parents and siblings, or symbolic patterns such as the use of language or games. Children from the age of 3 are able not only to categorize individuals based on their gender, but also to attribute specific objects and activities to men or women. School as the second factor in the socialization of children, can help them to recognize and challenge stereotypes representing the erroneous, one-sided and rigid knowledge of individuals about social groups and contributes to formation of a healthy personality and a future active citizen.

The implementation of the teaching modules confirmed that the children arrive at the kindergarten with the gender stereotypes structured at an early stage within them. It was observed that more boys follow behaviors that are considered more socially acceptable for their gender, compared to girls. Through participation in the activities, the children saw the "other" not as an obstacle or threat, but as an advantage that leads to the recognition and acceptance of the other as a partner and companion.

The implementation of the activities in an environment of acceptance and security, allowed the children to develop and express their ideas, while at the same time learning to accept that there are different positions and views. The acceptance environment reinforced the children's attempt to think outside the stereotypes without fear of being ridiculed and rejected. The children were encouraged to listen to each other and reflect together. This process enhanced their personal and social development as they began to perceive and understand the feelings and views of others, to communicate and collaborate with others to share stories from their daily lives. The activities incorporated the physical, cognitive and emotional experience of each child so far.

The topics that were quite difficult for the children were the power relations in the family, the relationship of equal value, reward for work of equal value, while they easily recognized the danger and its source regarding the hero. From the activities used by the teachers in the time interposed between the modules, the activity that the children really liked was borrowed from the educational drama: cutting in time or otherwise frozen images, because it seemed to work liberatingly to the children and enabled them to express emotions - positive or negative - as they impersonate someone else. Most of the children chose to represent scenes where the heroes were in danger and then identified the source of the danger.

Although we live in an age of rapid technological advancement and the omnipotence of the image, fairy tales continue to excite children, as they help them perceive the world around them in a symbolic and "playful" way. They offer a "cushion" of security that gives space to raise complex issues - such as violence, gender discrimination - issues that children will encounter growing up. The heroes of fairy tales are the "mentor", the guide of the children in their attempt to cope with the difficulties and solve conflicts, their attempt to accept their feelings and control their expression, to respect others and the rules of the group.

"If a child is not allowed to enter the realm of the imaginary, he will never be able to face reality. A child's need for stories is as basic as his need for food, and it manifests just like hunger. "Tell me a story, Dad, please." And then the father sits down and tells a story to his son. Or else he lies in the dark next to him, the two of them on the child's bed and starts talking, as if there was nothing left in the world but his voice, telling a story to his son in the dark. It is often a fairy tale or an adventurous story. But often it is nothing more than a mere leap into the imaginary. "

Paul Oster, Excerpt from the book: THE INVENTION OF LONELINESS

5. KEY CONCLUSIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

The Kindergarten is the first official educational institution for children. The children arrive at the Kindergarten having already acquired their gender identity, through their family. They bring with them certain perceptions, stereotypical perceptions, about the different roles and behaviors of the two sexes and as a rule they revive them. As already mentioned, not only they categorize people based on their gender, but also attribute specific objects and activities to men or women:

- "Feminine" objects or activities, such as a handkerchief, a skirt, washing dishes, cooking
- "Men's" objects or activities such as a suit, a tool, watching football.

Also, they separate and distinguish the professions into "female" and "male", nurse - female, doctor - male, kindergarten teacher - female, car mechanic - male.

Related research⁷¹ also show that both parents and kindergarten teachers - without even realizing it - treat girls and boys in such a way that they are encouraged to behave according to the socially accepted stereotypes of their gender, stereotypes that they carry and the teachers themselves. This can happen, involuntarily or voluntarily, from the way they organize and spatially shape the activity areas in the room, the choice of logistics, the verbal or non-verbal communication they develop with the children, the differentiated characterizations they use for the boys and girls, motivation to choose and engage in different games and types of activities that "fit" more with their gender⁷².

The Kindergarten, as a body of socialization of the child, can contribute to its socialization in terms of the role of gender in various ways and practices, such as:

- assigning different activities to boys and girls according to their interests and abilities and not based on gender
- equal participation of all in the classroom, whether it is role-playing games, yard games, computer use, or engaging in routine activities such as cleaning and tidying up the classroom
- the grouping of children in the educational process not on the basis of gender but on the basis of the cooperation of children with similar abilities and other times with different ones, depending on the goal of the group
- the interaction of the peer group on an equal footing
- the use of books free of racial or other standards
- the use of pedagogical material based on the common interests of boys and girls
- its staffing with teachers of both sexes. In Greece the presence of the male Kindergarten teacher is almost invisible.

It is therefore necessary to educate, train and raise awareness of incumbent teachers, educators, on gender and equality issues, but also to encourage school units to implement prevention and information programs on gender equality.

Another important factor in promoting equality in preschool is parents. Parents, or other family members, give different toys to boys and girls, from a very early age, and encourage them to engage in different activities for both sexes. It is therefore necessary to raise parents' awareness on issues of promoting equality and prevention of gender-based violence.

In conclusion, we can say that the promotion of gender equality is not just an issue for girls and women: it concerns boys, men, but also society in all its forms and touches every aspect of our lives.

⁷¹ <https://amitos.library.uop.gr/xmlui.uop.gr/handle/123456789/4798>

⁷² Presentation: Pedagogical practices and gender identities in Kindergarten. Kotronidou Ioanna, Teacher PE60, M. Sc. Management and Evaluation of Educational Units, Proceedings of the Hellenic Institute of Applied Pedagogy and Education (HELLIEPEK), 6th Panhellenic Conference, 5-7 Oct 2012

Gender equality can be the starting point for progress and democracy, by building an equal partnership between boys and girls, men and women. Preventing gender-based violence and combating gender stereotypes can and should begin in preschool, through playful collaborative learning processes. The use of fairy tales could be one of the ways to introduce and present the many social roles that girls and boys, women and men can play when they have equal access to education.

Addressing and reconstructing prejudices and gender stereotypes is a process that concerns everyone, parents-teachers-society. It is a complex process, which must start from preschool age and continue with lifelong learning and education at all ages.

Appendix

Part 1: Activities to work with on the fairy tales

We choose activities which are fun but with seriousness. If the children enjoy the activities they will express themselves easier. When we choose the activities, we also have to bear in mind the children's age, experiences, morals, interests and the place that we will work in.

For our fairy tales we have chosen techniques from "Process Drama" and others. We have to point out that the techniques used are not a fully-featured drama.

Activities

1. Role on the wall

The outline of Snow White's body is drawn on a large sheet of paper, which is stuck onto the wall. Words or phrases describing Snow White are then written directly onto the drawing by the animator. You can include known facts such as physical appearance, age, gender, location and occupation, as well as subjective ideas such as likes/dislikes, friends/enemies, opinions, motivations, secrets and dreams. We write inside the outline what Snow White believes for her and outside what others think of her. The children can return to add more ideas, thoughts and feelings as they discover more about the character over time. This activity can answer some of the questions we have posed and cause disputes among the children which can be very helpful in introducing new questions.

2. Making character's (e.g. Snow White) room.

The animator creates a shape with a scotch tape on the floor. We tell the children that this is Snow White's room and we ask them to put in the details. The children decide where the door is, are there any windows and where they are situated. We also mark them with scotch tape. We then give them little pieces of paper and they draw or write which objects there are inside the room, and they put them in the place they think they are. We then ask questions about these objects such as: "I wonder why Snow White has a mirror", "is it a big one", "does she like mirrors?", or if they haven't put a mirror in the room we ask: "I wonder why she doesn't have a mirror", "doesn't she like to look herself in it". The questions are unlimited and depend upon the determinants we have decided to look for in each fairy tale and of course on the answers the children give us.

3. Next steps

- When we have finished with the room, we can do an improvisation inside the room. For example, we can ask the children to show what the character is doing in the room when she is alone after having dinner with her family. We can ask what they think she does first, does she look herself in the mirror, does she read a book, does she need a servant to get undressed, etc. The children "play" the scene.

- We ask the children what Snow-White would take from her room if she was given the chance. Which three objects would she put in a suitcase? The children can draw the objects or we can write them on paper. We ask them:

- wonder why Snow White took her brush with her or didn't?
- Did she take any money with her?

If the answer is Yes, we can ask:

- Where did she get the money from?

and if the answer is No, we can ask:

- What if she needs to buy some food?

Once again the questions depend on the answers and on our goal.

4. Unfinished materials.

We try to finish an unfinished drawing that Snow-White has left in her room. The drawing can picture a place in the castle or in the forest or in the dwarves' house and the children draw Snow-White or any other character they want in it. We can also give to the children different pictures from the illustration of the fairy tales which are missing a piece and ask them to complete them by drawing or by cutting images from magazines. We ask questions such as "Snow- White is very tall in this drawing, but her stepmother is taller. Is it because she is older?"

5. Marking the Moment

Is it a dramatic technique used to highlight a key moment of a story? This can be done in many ways. For example, we tell the kids that we are taking a picture of Snow White when the dwarves come back from work, or when they are all together in the house or out in the wood. The children in small groups represent the picture. We can now depict their ideas about who is serving the food, or who is washing the dishes, which is resting or cutting wood. We can also ask the children who are watching, to get in the frame one by one and by touching one of the characters say what his thoughts are. We help the children by asking questions like: "I wonder what Snow White is thinking now that she is washing the dishes". Another way is to encourage the children to do an improvisation and then talk about it. We have to bear in mind that frozen images are used to crystallize an important moment so that they can be effective.

6. Inside the hero's room

Inside the hero's room we have an unfinished letter. We ask the children to finish it. The letter could begin with a phrase that will arise questions from the children for example if the mother goat is writing a letter to a friend of hers saying that she is really frightened to leave her children alone and she is asking for advice. We can ask questions such as how does she feel to leave her children alone, if there was a male goat in the house would they be protected, would he leave his children alone, does mom goat has another alternative other than leaving her children etc. The children finish the letter and we mail it.

All these activities can be used in all the fairy tales with the appropriate modifications.

Other activities we can do with the children

- If a character from one fairy tale wrote a letter to another what would he or she say to him or her? For example, if the Beauty wrote a letter to Snow White about beauty and mirrors....
- Mom goat is talking to the phone with a friend about a problem that she has for example she is running out of money what she could do the children do an improvisation.
- Snow White is talking a walk in the forest and finds a purse full of money. What does she do with it does she buy anything what?
- If mom left some instructions for the little goats of things to do what would they be who would do them. We make a list.
- We ask the children to be journalists what would they write at the newspaper and what photo would they put if they had to cover the story of the mom goat who left her children alone or how would they describe Beauty's love for the Beast. We can help them by asking did Beauty like the Beast at the beginning or what did the beast do that made Beauty grow fond of him etc. We can write down their suggestions and they draw the main "photo" of the article.

The questions we can ask are unlimited but we have to listen first to what the children say and then

adjust our questions. We have to remember that thought needs time to elaborate and the kids answer only if they are interested in what we are doing. They will also feel more secure if they see us not as the ones who know all the answers, but as the ones who are searching for answers with them.

Part 2: Introductory games/games of Acquaintance and Relaxation games between structured activities

Many kids feel shy and lack confidence, when it comes to interacting with other people in a group. It is thus, very important to engage kids in icebreaking activities or games. This way, we can make all of them feel comfortable with each other so that they fully participate to the group and forge bonds between them. Let's look at a few of these activities.

1. 1st game

Objects needed: a large soft ball

The children sit a circle. The facilitator is standing in the centre holding a large soft ball. She tells her name and something about her for example what is her favorite food, or color. She then throws the ball to a student and they tell their name and something about them. This is a great activity for relieving anxiety if the children don't know each other well. We can vary the game by telling the children at first to walk around and shake hands with every one they meet and then shake hands and say their name.

2. 2nd game

Objects needed: a large beach ball, a marker

Write on a large beach ball with a marker questions like:

- ✓ what's your name?
- ✓ what is your favorite food?
- ✓ what is your favorite game?
- ✓ do you have any pets?

Or even easy funny things to do like:

- ✓ touch your belly with one hand and jump.
- ✓ sing a song.
- ✓ do an animal.

Each child throws the ball and then catches it. We see which question is written under his left or right thumb.

3. 3rd game

Objects needed: newspaper sheets, music

Play a game with newspapers

Put the newspapers down on the floor. You have to have as many sheets as the children involved and put on some music. When the music stops each child stands on a newspaper sheet. You then remove a sheet so that the kids are outnumbered. The next time the music stops, two kids will have to share the same sheet. You continue when all the kids will be standing on the same sheet.

4. 4th game, Saying hello in funny ways

Objects needed: music

The children walk around the room listening to an instrumental part. When the music stops they have to "say hello" to the child near them by touching parts of each other's bodies such as their elbows or their noses etc.

5.5th game

Objects needed: post it papers, photos from magazines

We can play a game which will help us depict on a first level if there are any stereotypes we can identify. We need pictures from magazines or photos which show household chores, sports, children in their beds, children going to school, working environments, amusements etc. We put them on a board side by side. We also have post it paper of two colors for example yellow for women and green for men. We explain to the children that one color is for men and the other for women and we ask them questions like:

- who puts you to bed or wake you up?
- who is going to work every day?
- who is going out for coffee? and so on...

Each child has to put the appropriate piece of paper under the photo that we are talking about. We can discuss with the children the results and ask them questions during the process like:

- You put a green paper under this photo. Does this mean that your mom never puts you to bed?

Additionally, we can use these or other games, in case that the children feel tired during their involvement with the activities. Before we begin our icebreaking games we need to explain to the children that we have to have some rules in order to make our team happy and productive. We need to explain in simple words that every team has to have rules. They already know that from school so it will not be difficult for them to set the team rules. We can ask them to draw in small pieces of paper accepted and unaccepted behaviors and then place them under two clouds a happy one and an unhappy one. We go back to them whenever needed.

To make the children “bond” and commit to the group even more we can suggest to find a name for our team. We listen to suggestions and we vote. We write our “team's” name on a board and the children write their names or draw around it.

III. BULGARIA

A series of activities were implemented in Bulgaria within the framework of the Fairy Tales Project, aimed at introducing the topic of gender equality (gender equality) into the education of children aged 5-7 years, with the active involvement of their parents and teachers. These project activities were carried out in close cooperation with the directors and teachers at two kindergartens in Targovishte. Their partnership on the project were indispensable to identifying the best solutions, pedagogical approaches and methodological adaptations to introducing the topic of gender equality in early childhood through the use of classic children's stories.

It might be a good idea to start presenting the national experience of Bulgaria, with an outline of the important laws, policies and regulations promoting gender equality as well as its introduction in early childhood education. They formed the basis for project activities aiming to contribute to questioning gender stereotypes for women and men and encouraging children to build safe and healthy relationships based on mutual respect and esteem.

Further, we will present the national perspective to the implementation of these activities and the experimental part of the project, with a focus on adapting to the pedagogical framework in the process of education in kindergartens and the local cultural characteristics. The summaries and conclusions will provide guidelines for sustainability and lasting presence of gender equality topics in the education of children aged 5-7 years.

12 training modules, based on 9 classic children's tales, complete the Guide to help teachers and professionals working with preschool children on gender equality topics.

1. POLICIES PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

Bulgaria has ratified a number of international conventions, as well as agreements under the international human rights law. The most significant among them in the field of gender equality, which map out the future strategic framework of the policy in this area, are the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on Women's Rights⁷³, adopted at the Fourth UN Conference on Women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women⁷⁴, together with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)⁷⁵, which monitors the implementation of the Convention and the Optional Protocol⁷⁶ to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

A significant part of the national legislation in the country related to equal opportunities for women and men has been adopted in the process of its harmonization with the *acquis communautaire*. In this process, national norms have been brought into line with European Union primary and secondary legislation, in particular in the field of equal treatment for women and men, equal opportunities for all and the fight against all forms of gender-based violence.).

Gender Equality Act⁷⁷

The state policy on gender equality in Bulgaria is regulated by a special **Gender Equality Act** (Promulgated SG No. 33 of April 26, 2016).

For the purposes of this Act, gender equality means “equal rights and obligations, equal opportunities for realization and overcoming obstacles in all areas of public life, as women and men are free to

⁷³ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>

⁷⁴ The Convention was ratified in 1981 - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>.

⁷⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/cedaw/pages/cedawindex.aspx>

⁷⁶ The Optional Protocol was ratified in 2006 - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/OPCEDAW.aspx>.

⁷⁷ <https://lex.bg/en/laws/ldoc/2136803101>

develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations of the social role of one's gender." (Additional provisions).

The state policy on gender equality is based on the principles of:

1. equal opportunities for women and men in all spheres of public, economic and political life;
2. equal access of women and men to all resources in society;
3. equal treatment of women and men and preventing gender-based discrimination and violence;
4. balanced representation of women and men in all decision-making bodies;
5. overcoming gender stereotypes.

According to the National Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality (2016-2020), the country has a comprehensive institutional mechanism for preventing and combating discrimination, and gender is one of the nineteen features for which the Protection against Discrimination Act provides protection. "The state strives to protect the political and social rights of women and men, promotes equality in the field of employment, pay and social security, professional qualifications and career development, reconciling family and professional life and the right and use of parental leave. The right of access to national and universal cultural values, the right to the development of personal culture, the freedom of artistic, scientific and technical creativity, inventive, copyright and related rights are guaranteed", the Strategy states.

Protection against Discrimination Act⁷⁸

The Protection against Discrimination Act (promulgated, SG No. 86/2003) largely complies with the *acquis communautaire* in the field of equal treatment of women and men.

It regulates equality in terms of employment and the exercise of the right to work, opportunities for training and professional qualification, equal pay for equal work. (Section I. Protection in the exercise of the right to work). In the field of education and training, the Law stipulates:

Art. 35 (1) The persons, carrying out training and education, as well as the compilers of textbooks and teaching aids shall be obliged to provide information and to apply methods of training and education in a way, aimed at overcoming stereotypes about the role of women and men in all spheres of social and family life.

(2) Kindergartens, schools and higher schools shall include in their educational programs and plans training on the problems of gender equality of women.

A number of strategic and operational documents have also contributed to the elimination of the differences between women and men and the prevention of discrimination in Bulgaria, such as: the National Program for Prevention and Protection against Domestic Violence, the National Strategy for Roma Integration, the National Program for Prevention and Combating Trafficking, etc.

2. TRAINING MODULES: THE NATIONAL EXPERIENCE

In Bulgaria there have been fragmented attempts to work on the topic of gender equality at kindergartens. Thematic classes were held with preschool children, mainly in the context of violence prevention. These attempts were mainly carried out by civil society organizations within time-bound projects. There are no pedagogical programs that are part of the compulsory education of children at kindergartens, and this is an obstacle to the sustainability and lasting presence of this topic in children's education and upbringing at an early age.

The reasons, on the one hand, may be that gender equality seems to present a complex topic and it is difficult to find the practical tools to "translate" it into children's language. Attempts going along these

⁷⁸ <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135472223>

lines have been isolated, based mainly on best practices in other countries and not always appropriate to the local context. This gap is widened by the lack of national standards and policies for introducing the topic of gender equality in early childhood education, which makes it unpopular, and encourages educational institutions to avoid it instead.

On the other hand, children are believed to be too young at kindergartens to be presented with topics on which there is no consensus in society. Gender equality, as well as the lack of it, is definitely a topic that provokes debate, conflict and division in society and touches upon our personal subjective feelings and vulnerability. The fact that at schools and especially in the secondary stage of education, clearly more varied forms of civic education have been introduced, to help children question gender stereotypes for women and men and promote equal opportunities for girls and boys. With older children, these topics are much more often part of their school agenda than they are with children aged 3 - 7.

The contribution of the *Fairy Tales Project* lies in the development of practical modules for working with children aged 5-7 years to overcome these shortcomings: they follow an innovative methodology for setting complex topics through children's most popular fairy tales. Being aware of the impact that supportive environment of significant adults has on child development, the team involved parents and teachers in the process to ensure that the topic will be permanently present in the upbringing and education of children at kindergartens and in their families.

The main goal of pedagogical interventions under this project was to turn kindergarten communities into a safer place for children by encouraging constructive cooperation among girls and boys.

Methods close to those used at kindergartens were applied, in terms of content structure and activity duration. This allowed for a smooth introduction of the new activity in the context of the already existing pedagogical practices and invited the children into an environment that feels familiar and close to them. At the same time, to mark the situational activities on the topic of gender equality as different, the project team introduced special symbols ("passports" for participants, stickers for each module, a verse, marking the for the beginning and end of activities). They served to differentiate modular training sessions as a coherent flow of activities in a certain sequence.

And opened opportunities encouraging children to freely express themselves without fear of punishment. This was particularly important for opening up discussions among children on topics, where there are no right or wrong views. Children's participation was encouraged with the clear understanding that children should be respected and supported in their interests and desires and encouraged to develop their potential.

Kindergartens' pedagogical practices in Bulgaria, have turned classic children's tales are into a well-known and widely used tool for working with children. They are present as part of the methodological framework of different age groups, including preschool age (5-7 years). Fairy tales are used to develop children's ability to learn new content, to categorize, to recreate a plot, to make a summary, to develop and enrich their speech. In this aspect, the project is based on the established practices of presenting classic children's tales. The building block was the use of plots to set new themes - gender roles of women and men, characteristics of fairy tale characters of both sexes, stereotypical and non-stereotypical images, violence and abuse, etc.

The introduction of a new fairy reality in the activities allowed to maintain a healthy distance from the personal experiences of children. Such complex and conflicting topics could be discussed without contradicting and clashing with the values that children are brought up with in their families and immediate environments. No tension or opposition built up, because moderators worked using the fairy-tale reality and characters, not children's personal experiences. Classic children's tales are a universal tool for introducing complex topics to young children. There is nothing more natural than their plots to present different life situations, including conflicts, abuse, violence in a child-friendly way.

The project efforts made use of the established practices in presenting 'softer version' of classic fairy tales. The adapted texts lack much of the 'scary' elements that have disappeared after a series of edits of the original stories. The practice in Bulgaria has been to present stories that do not feed strong negative emotions and especially fear. This is in line with established public attitudes censoring 'bad' story features, aligning with children's fears, anxiety and feeding internal conflicts. To avoid feud battles over established methods of work at kindergartens, the project used the edited texts of fairy tales. It is the position of the project's expert team that changes in these routine practices will assist the efforts to prepare children respond adequately to risky situations. Practice shows that violence and abuse of children occurs even in infancy and, prevention programs should start early, finding an appropriate way to introduce the topic at kindergartens. When children are kept away from complex and conflicting topics, such as violence and abuse, it does not prevent them from becoming victims, but on the contrary, increases the risk because they remain uninformed and unprepared for possible dangers.

3. METHODOLOGY AND MODULE ADAPTING

The training modules were first applied between September 2019 and January 2020 with an experimental group of children at *The Fairy Tale* Kindergarten Targovishte. The experimental group aimed to test the practical modules for introducing the topic of gender equality in preschool education, using the classic children's stories, as well as to explore the extent to which the activities in each module meet the objectives and reflect the key messages to children.

The group included 27 children aged 5-7 (16 girls and 11 boys, two of them, a boy and a girl, with special educational needs). Most of the children come from the small villages in Targovishte district, and 18 of them have a mother tongue other than Bulgarian.

Interactive methods of work were employed (brainstorming, situational games, reading fairy tales, picture tests, group discussions, etc.), and visual materials (drawings of the main characters, animated maps of various objects, presentations, stickers, dolls, etc.) were used. Discussions in small and large groups were practiced to provoke a debate that help children become more autonomous in their thinking, outside the limits set by moderators. When children reflected on gender equality, they were encouraged to think outside of gender stereotypes without fear of being ridiculed and rejected.

Methods for monitoring on process level were used by project staff (e.g. how the children reacted, whether they actively participated, their important comments or questions, what was the general atmosphere, the communication between the children, the communication between the children and the moderators).

The project team discussed in detail how each module was implemented in terms of the results it achieved: activity goals and what worked well for children, how supported they felt, what activities seemed too difficult for them, etc. These discussions would typically be held with the participation of the kindergarten director and teachers, as well as the project's pedagogical experts, who would give their professional opinion on the implementation of each module. Teacher's suggestions for improving activities' content and teaching tools were taken into consideration and a number of important changes were made as a result.

1. Adapting the modules to the understanding of children aged 5-7. The following difficulties were singled out during the analysis and assessment of the module activities carried out at the experimental group:

- Too many tasks planned to be performed within the time slots for each training session (35-45 min);
- Using concepts that do not correspond to the children's cognitive abilities and as a result they do not understand them;

- Lack of visualizations to illustrate certain cases and situations;
- Poor combination of individual and group work at times.

The training modules were adapted in the following way:

1.1. Certain modules, the high-volume ones in particular, were structured in two parts, and could be held in two subsequent situations on two different days or on the same day, with a break in-between. This applied to modules, presenting topics such as decision-making, professional development, pay, etc where children have limited or no experience at all. They needed to be given more information on the topic in advance in order to enrich their knowledge and then be able to apply it in practice. For this reason, the modules were divided into two sessions: not to burden the children and give them more adequate activity preparation at the same time. The content of other modules was reduced to fit the timeframe.

1.2. Module contents was redrafted and simplified to make it more understandable for children. Concepts that do not match their cognitive and life experience, as well as situations that they cannot imagine, were omitted. Following teachers' recommendations, visualization was designed for some of the module contents to make it more understandable.

1.3. Both individual and group work in the module activities was structured entirely at the discretion of the children's teachers on the basis of their pedagogical experience. To work more effectively with children and avoid turbulent group dynamics, activities originally designed as group were replaced by individual ones and vice versa. This further increased children's understanding and their involvement in the activities grew stronger.

2. A positive approach was applied to gender equality. The changes we made involved reformulating the messages to children. We shifted the focus from deficits and problems to opportunities and solutions. In this way, children are given a positive example, instead of focusing on differences, injustices, negative characteristics. The idea is to present positive examples of the roles of women and men, finding the right balance between caring for others and pursuing self-improvement and personal fulfillment. We introduced a model of gender equality in sharing household/housework, in choosing a profession, receiving adequate pay for it, and participating in decision-making.

3. Linking modules to fairy tales. Activities were changed to be directly related to the respective children's story. Children take the roles of the characters in the story, respond on their behalf, work with objects specific to a particular character.

4. Adapting logistics: the following changes were made as a result of discussions held with teachers participating in the project as leaders of the experimental group:

4.1. Following the practice of working with children at the kindergarten, three to four 4 classes are devoted to each story. The story is to be read during class one; class two focuses on its key moments, protagonists and their qualities, lessons learnt; in class three, topics linked to the particular module are introduced, using understandable language, particularly if unfamiliar and difficult for children to understand; class four focuses on gender equality.

4.2. In modules, making use of materials unknown to children (dolls, sticks, costumes for professions, etc.), all of them should be presented in advance to help children get acquainted first and only then focus on their tasks.

4.3. Children should feel free to engage at any time during the module. Experts recommended that children should not feel pressed to answer moderators' questions. Copycat answers may turn out to be the most likely result. Practice shows that in this case the copying of the answers begins. It is advisable to invite answers from children who want to say something.

4.4. Same rules should apply during module activities as the rules followed at the kindergarten on a daily basis. The focus on models that children have already learnt to follow.

4.5. Children should be supported to express their opinions freely without fear of being ridiculed and rejected. Where possible, conditions for anonymity should be created in class, such as placing a screen in the voting module. This will protect children from peer pressure and allow them to be free to express their opinions.

5. Complex topics should be linked to concepts and situations, familiar to children in their daily lives. Example: When it is necessary to define what is correct and what isn't, use traffic light symbols, children know them well.

4. WORKING WITH CHILDREN: EXPERIENCE AND LESSONS LEARNT

The practical activities confirmed how spontaneous and authentic children are at this age. Prejudices and gender stereotypes are still foreign to them, and this opens up opportunities to question them. However, despite their fragile age, the roots of gender stereotyping are already traceable: the distribution of housework and free time, the choice of toys, certain color preferences, assigning different tasks and enforcing different rules for girls and boys. On the other hand, on the issues of pay for women and men and their participation in the decision-making process, children set an example of equal treatment and demonstrated their unbiased attitudes.

Children's teachers and parents, being their most significant adult figures who shape children's values, should encourage the building of meaningful relationships between girls and boys, with and mutual respect and esteem among them. When in a supportive environment, sensitive to gender inequalities and critical towards stereotypical family and social roles, children feel encouraged to express their interests and realize their potential without being restricted to following socially acceptable models for girls and boys.

When ready-made solutions are offered to children, they narrow down their abilities for critical thinking and make them follow behaviours they have seen in adults. The education system still needs to further develop in order to encourage children to express their opinions freely, particularly when they run against prevailing attitudes. We have learned that every child has their own idea on gender equality, but sometimes there are invisible barriers, preventing them from voicing it, like the fear of ridicule and rejection.

Raising children by giving them positive role models to follow proved to be an efficient and sustainable strategy over time. Due to the specifics of their age and their limited ability to influence the decisions and behavior of adults, children do not have the resources to deal with problematic situations, injustices and inequalities. When topics are presented to them through their deficits, it is very difficult to expect a positive change, because it is not in the children's ability to compensate for these shortcomings and this will only strengthen their sense of helplessness and failure. Conversely, when children are given positive examples, they could be an inspiring message to them that change is possible and problems can be solved.

Fairy tales continue to excite children, even in the age of new digital technologies. They bring lasting value and help children understand the true diversity of the world around them in an interesting and gentle way. Fairy tales provide an unlimited opportunity to raise complex and conflicting topics that accompany the growth of children. The variety of plots and images can serve as a tool to challenge gender stereotypes. In addition to pedagogical practice, fairy tales and characters are also suitable for therapeutic activities with children.

Once upon a time... these words keep casting their spell on children today. Depriving children of the good, old tales, comes straight from the Book is one of the ways we have as adults to harm them.

5. KEY CONCLUSIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Early childhood is a period crucial for children's physical, cognitive, emotional and personal development. At this age the basic values are actively shaped, to be further developed and followed in the life of the child as an adult. This age should not be neglected and excluded from the cycle of civic education.

Children should be seen as active and engaged citizens who have rich potential and creativity and who are able to form and express their views on issues related to them. It is recommended that child participation be encouraged at every stage of the education system, including kindergartens.

Kindergartens are a suitable environment for promoting harmonious and constructive relationships between girls and boys. It would be good to discuss in detail the introduction of special programs and methodologies for early childhood training on gender equality.

Although insufficient, there are policies in Bulgaria promoting equal opportunities for women and men, including regulations for educational programs that challenge stereotypical images of both genders. However, the commitment declared on paper is not reflected in the practical work with children. The system of education has been identified as a key territory for promoting equality, and clearly there is lack of experience and best practice.

Kindergarten environment is quite important for promoting healthy relationships between girls and boys. In preschool, children start making sense of the world around them as they play. Therefore, they should be offered various games and activities that allow them to question the stereotypes about girls and boys. Assuming that girls would not be interested in a game or activity, traditionally considered suitable for boys and vice versa, we run the risk to harm children's interests.

In the process of kindergarten education and upbringing it is important to present truthfully the variety of social roles that girls and boys / men and women can play. This would inspire children to pursue their interests and have brave dreams. In this regard, significant progress has been made in including topics, linked to career development and the visualization of different professions, in the aids used by kindergarten teachers (such as pictures of police or military women and men, as well as holding meetings with women and men, working as police officers, doctors, teachers, etc.). Good practices could be further developed by presenting women and men, sharing housework and childcare responsibilities, and questioning other family stereotypes, as well as participating in the decision-making at the workplace.

CONCLUSIONS AND GUIDANCE

The experience and pedagogical practices gained within the project provided an opportunity to experiment in a real learning environment and introduce the topic of gender equality in preschool and primary school education. The parallel work of teams in three different countries - Bulgaria, Italy and Greece - expanded and enriched the project experience through the exchange of best practice and spotting new solutions.

A key project contribution is the involvement of children, teachers and parents in methodological tool development. This brought together different perspectives on the topic of gender equality and took into account both the challenges and difficulties, as well as the strengths and potential of each group to contribute to the promotion of constructive relationships between girls and boys at an early age.

We would like to express our appreciation for the efforts of the children, teachers and parents who actively participated in the development of methodologies and pedagogical tools. Their opinions, comments and recommendations were indispensable for the project experts and allowed them to design really engaging situational activities and to find appropriate ways to address complex and conflicting topics on the social agenda.

Project results, including this Guide and its practical modules, have the potential to reach out beyond the local background of the three participating countries and to be adapted to the educational systems and pedagogical practices of other member states. They are flexible and adaptable to both in countries with developed policies to promote gender equality and in countries where the topic is somewhat unpopular and public awareness quite modest.

Working within a tight timeframe, the project team had the chance to work with a set of 9 classic children's tales. The model offered by the team may be applied to other popular and favorite stories for children. We hope that our experience and practice will inspire other organizations and training institutions in Europe to develop, improve and expand the range of practical modules and add new ideas for introducing the topic of gender equality in pre-school and primary school education.

The project created a special online platform for training children's teachers, <https://www.fairytales.eu/>, which presents the main theoretical statements on which our experience is based, as well as the practical modules applied in the three countries. The digital environment provides another opportunity to share lessons learned and exchange expertise at European level. We expect to receive ideas for new approaches and techniques for working with children at an early age on the topic of "gender equality", which we will apply in the future.



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APPENDICES

TRAINING MODULES

for 5 to 7 year-old children on Gender Equality designed and tested in Italy

In Italy, Defence for Children International – Italy rolled out the project activities in collaboration with the Association “La Stanza”. The boys and girls who participated were aged between five and seven years old and enrolled in the first two grades of the elementary school “Convitto Nazionale Colombo” (Comprehensive Institute Colombo) in Genoa.

Based in Genoa, the Association “La Stanza” is a leading actor promoting the development of children and youth in the city through intercultural and environmental pedagogy, artistic forms of expression and cultural programmes. The Association has long-standing expertise in organizing different workshops, training for teachers and family programmes.



In light of the overall objectives of the project, the working methods were selected with due consideration to participatory approaches and interactive consultations with children on a range of questions concerning meaning and sense in life. The methodology aimed to foster the children's intellectual development, supporting spontaneous exploration and encouraging the children to form their own opinions with regard to behaviour and points of view, free from pre-determined normative frameworks or manipulation.

The aspiration was to stimulate the children's own exploration and research through playful and non-judgmental approaches. The children were encouraged to listen to each other and to reflect together. Each child was given the time that he or she needed in order to develop their own ideas and they learned to accept that there are different positions and statements. Through this exercise, the children started to open up and felt at ease about sharing stories from their personal and family lives and school situations.

To facilitate this process, the workshops were organised in an enabling environment that differed from the typical classroom setting. The girls and boys were welcomed in a warm and informal atmosphere that aimed to stimulate curiosity, dialogue and interaction in a setting characterised by trust and wellbeing. In addition, the choice of lights, objects and materials in the meeting room helped to distinguish the setting from the classroom and to inspire a different attitude where children can explore their evolving capacities.

The project engaged around 50 children who were divided in sub-groups of 10-15 children each. The children worked with three fairy tales, Little Red Riding Hood, Hansel and Gretel and Snow White. The workshops were structured in a total of four encounters, each with a duration of two hours.

In the closing session, the children handed over the “Librone Memoria”, the Memory Booklet, which they had developed together during the workshop. Depending on the time available, the children were able to share with the whole class their experience of developing this booklet and how they felt about exploring some of the articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The closure of the workshop offered an opportunity to celebrate the work done by the children, to thank them for their active participation and to wish them good bye.

The workshop structure

This section provides an overview and schematic structure of the workshops with children that were held in Italy between November 2019 and February 2020.

Practical details:

- Each workshop is structured in four sessions that build upon each other, and one closing session. The sessions engage the same group of children. The duration of one session is 1.5 to 2 hours.
- The workshop is led by one moderator who acts as the lead facilitator and trainer and collaborate with, as a minimum, one assistant facilitator and, if possible, one of the children's teachers.
- The maximum number of participants is 15 children in the age group 5-7 years.
- The workshop should ideally be held in an empty and non-furnished room, there should be no tables. The room should have a wooden floor or carpet, and there should be large cushions, mats or little chairs for the children to sit on.
- A video projector and speakers.
- A smartphone or video camera to video record the most important moments. The children and parents/guardians are informed about this activity and consent to the children's participation. Their informed consent should be asked also specifically with regard to the video recording.
- Various puppets: monkeys puppets, two puppets representing a boy and a girl and a puppet representing an elderly lady (the cook).
- Various materials: Ink pad in red and blue ink, brushes, red and black marker pens to write with, scissors, various materials to stick on cardboard, home-made glue consisting of flour and water (optional), glue gun, coloured candies and sweets, diluted tempera, white paper or cardboards in different dimensions, cardboard or paper sheets to produce the Memory Booklet (format A3 or larger), white A4 size paper, masking tape, adhesive strips, and textile materials. The adhesive strips are to be used as little white flags, on which the children write the keywords related to the determinants of gender equality.

The determinants of gender equality

The Fairy Tales project works with the domains identified by the Gender Equality Index of EIGE (European Institute of Gender Equality). These domains guide the reflection with children on matters related to gender gap and gender discrimination. We called these domains “determinants”. They are: work, money (that in the work with children become resources), knowledge, time, power, health plus the additional domain of violence (please see <https://eige.europa.eu>).

First session



Duration: 1.5 – 2 hours

KEY DETERMINANTS: work, money (that in the work with children become resources), knowledge, time, power, health plus the additional domain of violence

1. INTRODUCTION TO MONKEY ISLAND AND THE WORLD OF RIGHTS

FIRST PART

Aim: To explore the different needs of the child, how they are connected and how needs relate to the rights of the child

The facilitator draws at the centre of the flipchart the figure of a child, and invites the children to imagine that this figure could be any child, a boy or a girl. Then, the facilitator asks the children to think about the needs of this child. What does this child need? While the children are taking a few minutes to reflect on this question, the facilitator distributes post-it stickers to the children and asks them to draw something on the post-it sticker that would represent a need that this child could have. When all children have finished the drawing, the facilitator asks them to come forward and to place their sticker on the flipchart, all around the figure of the child at the centre.

The facilitator points one by one at each of the post-it stickers and asks the child who has done it to describe the drawing on the sticker and what type of need it represents. After giving this description, the facilitator asks the child to introduce her- or himself. At the end of this exercise, when all children have introduced themselves, the facilitator asks the children if they can think of any needs that are missing on the flipchart or if they want to add some other needs. While the children may share additional thoughts on the needs of the child, the facilitator makes simple drawings to represent these needs, adding them thereby to the collection of stickers assembled by the children.

When the stickers and drawings on the flipchart give quite a complete picture of all basic needs, the facilitator tells the children about the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the CRC, and explains that this is an international treaty that sets out the rights of the child. It has been signed by almost all the countries in the world. The CRC includes all the needs of the child, and it says also, that these needs are at the same time rights. The facilitator explains in simple words what a right is and how it is different from a need. The facilitator might, for instance, say that having a right means that the state has an obligation to ensure that people can actually enjoy these rights. The state has to make sure that rights are guaranteed to all children. All children have rights, no matter who they are and where they come from. For instance, small children need an adult who cares for them and looks after them and the Convention says that children also have the right to be looked after by someone who really cares for them.

Children need to play and they have a right to play. Children need to learn new things so that they can develop their capacities as they grow up and they also have a right to learn and to get support for developing their capacities. Children need a home where they can stay and feel at ease and relax and they have a right to have a home. Where children or the child's parents have difficulties to meet all the needs of the child, the state should help the family to respond to the child's needs.

The needs of the child can be grouped into four areas: primary or basic needs, such as food, health, home, hygiene; needs related to development, such as education, vocational training, work, spirituality, cultural identity; need for protection, for instance protection from all forms of harm, including violence and exploitation; and the need to participate in matters that concern the child, for instance in everyday questions, in family life, in the school and in the community, but also in politics. The Convention on the Rights of the child is very clear that all these four areas are also connected to the rights of the child. In particular, the Convention says that children have the right to have an opinion and to say what their opinion is. Children are encouraged to express their views and they also have the right to be heard and that adults take their views into account whenever there are decisions to be taken. This is called the right of the child to participate in all matters that concern them. At the end of the exercise, the facilitator hands out to the children a child-friendly version of the Convention and encourages the children to keep it in the classroom so that they have the possibility to read it and to get back to it, to look at it again and consult it.

SECOND PART

Aim: To strengthen the children's **capability of analysing and interpreting** classic fairy tales. The fairy tales are presented through a metaphoric narration of an “ideal world” where the rights of all individuals are promoted and respected and there is no discrimination based on gender or other factors.

The children sit in a circle, on cushions or mats on the floor or on little chairs, together with the moderator while the assistant facilitator develops a drawing on a flipchart that gradually represents the landscape of Monkey Island and continues to take shape as the narration progresses.

The moderator welcomes the children and explains the activity that they will participate in together. He/she tells them that in order to explore some classic fairy tales together, it will be important to get to know a new story that has never been told before, a story that has already been conceived but that needed some help from the children who could enrich it along their journey together.

The moderator begins to tell the story of Monkey Island. During the narration, he/she comments on several key points and emphasises those parts of the story where there are passages relating to the determinants of gender equality.



STORY OF MONKEY ISLAND:

This story happened a very long time ago. It is the story of two children, a boy and a girl, Elias and Zoe, who are more or less at your age. Zoe and Elias are not siblings, maybe distant cousins. They know each other very well. Together with their guardians, they are on a ship out on the sea, when a heavy storm comes up. The storm is so strong that the children fall off the ship and into the sea.

Zoe has red curls tied together with many ribbons, she has freckles on her face and is wearing a long green velvet dress. The dress is so long that it will become very heavy when she falls into the water and that risks tearing her down to the ground of the sea. But Zoe knows how to swim, she takes off her dress and her

shoes and so she wears only her undergarments. She swims and swims towards the shore. She's very tired and scared, but she manages to reach the shore where she lies down on the sand and falls asleep.

Elias cannot swim that well, but he is strong and holds on to a wooden barrel. His boots are heavy boots and full of water. It takes him quite some effort to take them off... and slowly he also reaches the beach.

The island is like a tiny dot in the middle of the ocean. It consists of rocks and stripes of white sand. Inland, there are rivers with fresh water, there is fruit on and underneath the trees, and there are many colourful fish in the sea.

*Very soon, the two children meet a family of **peaceful** monkeys who welcome them among their people. They are the monkeys of the Atlantic Mata of Amazonia with particular characteristics: they **are not aggressive** at all, on the contrary, they are very kind; they **do not have a hierarchy** in their family, they relate to each other through **a gentle touch and by cuddling** each other. They are very **attentive to the well-being of everyone**, but **especially of the youngest, the elderly and the sick**. The males **do not assault the females to make love**, but wait for the females to be available and to call them.*

*The monkey family adopts the two children who gradually forget the habits and rules of their previous life: they no longer need any clothes (for swimming, jumping, climbing... playing ball with the green coconuts...) and the two **children gradually get used to nudity as a natural way of being**; they help and take part in the life of the community.*

***Everybody is equal but they are also all different:** The monkeys have a fur, the children do not; Zoe has a small line between her legs, Elias has a little skin bag and a tube, but **apart of that, the bodies of the two children are the same**. Certainly, Zoe has long red curls, Elias has straight and blond hair that has grown long by now. The colour of their eyes is different, as well as the shape of their noses.*

Among the monkeys, no one has more power than the others. Decisions are made together and by consent, whenever needed, listening to everyone's opinion, from the oldest to the youngest...



The adult monkeys, male and female, are the only ones who are able to climb up to the top of the tallest palm trees on the island and to pick the coconuts, which are the main food for everyone, the children, adults and the elderly. No one else is able to do this.

But **everyone helps to do everything** else and even Elias and Zoe soon learn what they have to do and how to do it, such as gathering more food, redoing the leaf shelters, cleaning the space they live in, keeping themselves clean and picking lice and fleas off their monkey friends... and **each one of them is good at something particular**: Zoe is able to swim and dive, Elias runs like a lightning and jumps on huge logs, Zoe likes to invent new songs and sing them. In the evenings, when the sun goes down, Elias makes beautiful necklaces using the shells he finds on the beach, he puts them all around his neck, gives them as presents to the monkeys, and hangs them on the trees around their shelters.

On the island, the monkeys do not have any particular enemies who would be a threat to them. They know very well, however, when a storm is coming up and whenever they see that happening, they take the children along with all the others to seek shelter in a deep cave high above the sea where they can **all stay safe** and protected from the rain, and where they dedicate themselves to their favourite pastime, that is to hug each other slowly, caressing their heads and making little sounds like a purring cat, and to sleep...

When they get a fever or their skin is burnt by the sun, the monkeys know how to cure themselves with special herbs and fruits. They know the properties of these herbs and fruits very well and gather them in the forest in order to use them in treatment.

The monkeys, all of them together, **teach the children** gently (like their own cubs) to avoid the dangerous places on the island, the animals that can hurt them, the berries that could poison them. **They take care of the children, they leave them the freedom to make their own experiences**, they let them play and wander around at length... **but they always watch over them**.

For the monkeys, every living being is as important and dear to them as their own brothers or sons. That is why they are very strict about two things:

The first is that they **do not like the use of force against others...** If someone hits someone else, or bothers them, or rips food or a toy out off their hands, or wants to make love by force ... all together they surround that monkey and, all together, they do not use force but – imagine! – **they start tickling that monkey**, they tickle him or her so much that the monkey is at risk of dying from laughter and promises never to do it again.

The second thing they are very strict about is their idea that **the things do not belong to one or another monkey but to everyone**: the earth, the sky, the water, the food, the fire belong to those who need them in that moment... That is why, if someone dares to accumulate and hide fruit, shells, fish or something else... the tickle cure is imposed followed by a nice division party!

For a few years, Zoe and Elias have a good life on Monkey Island.

One day, however, a ship arrives at the island to rescue them and to take them back to the "**Land of the Patriarchs**", i.e. the land where they were born and where there are very different laws, customs and rules. Some of the monkeys are captured and placed in the ship's hold, in cells, like prisoners.

On the ship, an educator teaches the children every day and reminds them of the rules that they had forgotten:

The first rule is that **all things belong to someone** who has conquered them, earned them and who accumulates them so that he or she can use them at his or her own discretion and, if he or she wishes, sell them or give them away.

The second rule is that if someone takes **without permission** something that is the property of another person, he or she can and, indeed, **must be punished**.

The third rule is that, in the Land of the Patriarchs, it is **normal that there are rich and poor people** and that the rich have more things, that their children are able to go to school, to study and to have a gracious living. As grown-ups they can be certain to find a good job, earn money and own many things. The children of the poor on the other side will hardly be able to study and to earn money. They **will have to work a lot and may be exploited because they do not have much power to make decisions**.

The fourth rule is that in the Land of the Patriarchs males are more important than females because that is how it has always been: they are stronger, more intelligent, they command and dictate everything.

And in addition, adults command the young ones, whereas the young have no power to decide and can be punished even harshly when they do not obey. Force and violence are the most important means that people use to regulate relationships and problems between individuals and between the people of different countries. Sometimes, due to this rule, violent wars break out between the people of different countries and that has serious consequences, especially for those who do not fight wars and who do not want them, the little ones.

Zoe and Elias are extremely puzzled... they think that it was maybe better to live with the peaceful monkeys.

In the meantime, everything has changed. The two children are dressed differently, one with "male" and the other with "female" clothes. The clothes are uncomfortable and Zoe finds them annoying, they are plain and no fun. The shell necklaces are thrown away, their hair is cut and arranged. The children are punished when they dare to swim naked but they do not understand why...

On board of the ship, an old lady is doing the cooking (at this point, the moderator takes out the puppet representing an elderly lady and puts it on his hand, giving it life). The cook is grumpy but kind hearted. In the evenings, she tells the children about the ancient fairy tales from the Land of the Patriarchs. The children love to listen to the cook when she tells them the fairy tales but quite often, they do not agree with what they hear, so they make comments, having in mind the monkeys' point of view and the rules of their island. The captive monkeys are allowed to listen to the stories of the grumpy cook as well. They are released from their cells and sit down together with the children and listen... and they, too, have many things to say...

The cook is starting to tell the fairy tale...



2. DISCUSSING THE STORY

At this point, the **dialogue** with the children begins, going back to the main points of the story of Monkey Island, and asking some questions that are related to the determinants of gender equality mentioned above:

- What are the basic needs of the two children (food, water, a home, clothes, care, protection, play...)?
- What are the basic needs of the monkeys?
- What do they need for their wellbeing on the island?
- Is there a difference between male and female monkeys?
- Does the opinion of male and female monkeys have a different weight in decision-making?
- Do they have a different power?
- Do male and female monkeys have a different job or role?
- Do you think that it is possible that no one on the island ever has an argument?
- Is no one ever bossy?
- Why do they have arguments?

While the children are engaging in a discussion, the assistant facilitator writes down the key concepts that the children bring forward on little adhesive strips. These strips will later be placed as little flags on top of the drawing representing Monkey Island.

3. ACTIVITIES LINKED TO THE NARRATION

Theatre:

The objective of this activity is for the children to experiment with the kindness and respectful behaviour of Monkey Island and to experience it through the “cuddle game”.

Preparations: The moderator lowers the lights and turns on the recorder reproducing the sound of a huge storm. The mats are placed on the floor and form a cushion island that represents the cave where the monkeys seek shelter from the storm. The children are sitting outside the cave when the moderator starts reproducing the sound of the storm. The children may close their eyes while they imagine to be on Monkey Island, in the midst of the storm. One after the other, the children move into the cave, calmly and quietly, trying to sit as close to one another as possible, without hurting or annoying another child and without being intrusive. They should feel the warmth and comfort of being close to each other and the sense of protection inside the cave.

Drawing:

The objective is to memorize the characters of the story and to give them a face, to draw the monkeys who live on the island and to check if there are gender differences in the drawings of the monkeys. The children receive some small cardboard and they are asked to draw a monkey on the cardboard using ink pad and wiping techniques. The children use a black marker pen to draw the details of the monkey's face and body. This exercise aims to give a face to the new character and to check if there are any gender differences. When done, each child writes the name of the monkey and the name of the child who drew it on the back side of the cardboard. Then, all the different monkeys are pinned to the drawing of Monkey Island in order to populate it.

Second session

Duration: 1.5-2 hours

KEY DETERMINANTS: money, protection from violence, power, time.

1. RETURN TO MONKEY ISLAND

Aim: To analyse the story of Little Red Riding Hood, focusing on risk and protection factors and other elements of the fairy tale that are relevant to the determinants.

The children are seated in a circle around the moderator. The drawing of Monkey Island hangs on the wall, the monkeys drawn by the children have been added to it and it is decorated with the little flags (adhesive strips) of the determinants.

The moderator summarises the key points of the story of Zoe and Elias, posing questions and prompts to the children to test their memory and how much detail they recall. This exercise helps the moderator to assess if it is possible to use the story as a guide for the analysis of the fairy tale of Little Red Riding Hood. The moderator seeks to focus particularly on those things that the children discover on the island, namely that boys and girls

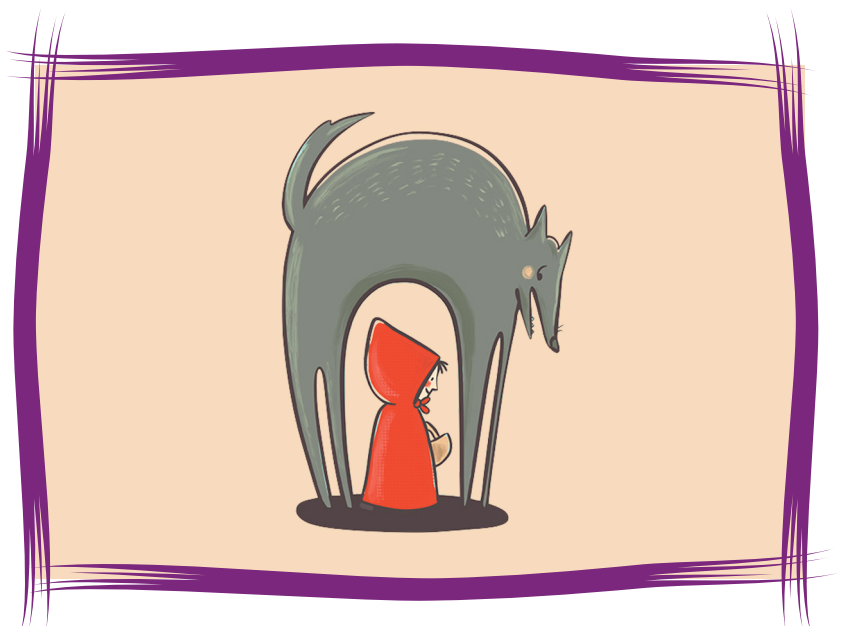
- Can do the same things, no matter if they are a boy or a girl;
- Have the same intellectual, inventive and creative capacities;
- Can choose to do different things in accordance with their own preferences;
- Can participate in the decision-making of the group and their points of view carry weight; and that,
- Among the monkeys, everyone is important and their views are all appreciated.

2. THE LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD AND THE PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE

The children are seated in a circle around the moderator. The drawing of Monkey Island hangs on the wall, enriched with the monkeys drawn by the children and decorated with the little flags (adhesive strips) of the determinants.

Another white piece of cardboard hangs right next to the cardboard of Monkey Island. While the moderator is reading out the story of Little Red Riding Hood, the assistant facilitator draws on the cardboard and creates the drawing of the forest where the Little Red Riding Hood is on her way to her grandmother's place.

The moderator, holding the puppet representing the old cook in his hand, reads out the fairy tale of Little Red Riding Hood. When the whole story has been read,



the children are invited to participate in a discussion. There is a rule for this discussion: Every child who wants to speak the floor holds the monkey puppet in his or her hand and talks on behalf of the monkey, that means putting him-or herself into the monkey's shoes and having the rules of Monkey Island in mind.

Guiding questions for the discussion with the children:

- What is the Little Red Riding Hood's living situation?
- Does she have a house and a family? Is she rich or poor?
- Is the Little Red Riding Hood protected?
- Who puts her life at risk? (The wolf threatens her, but also mommy puts her at risk as she leaves her alone in the woods although she knows the wolf is around.)
- Who takes the decisions concerning the Little Red Riding Hood? (Her mom takes decisions, Little Red Riding Hood decides not to obey, and the hunter decides to cut open the wolf's belly...)
- How can the Little Red Riding Hood protect herself?
- Who is the strongest character in the story?
- Who is the weakest character? (The grandmother who is old, the Little Riding Hood because she is a little girl, but is she weak because she is a girl?)

The story has two different endings as there are two versions, the original one told by the brothers Grimm and another version by Perrault: In the most widely known version of Grimm, the wolf is killed by the hunter. The grandmother and the Little Red Riding Hood learn from this experience to protect themselves from another wolf that tries to attack them. The version of Perrault does not have a happy ending and contains a final morale.

These two endings are discussed with the children.

The children are asked to discuss how the story would evolve if the grandmother was a grandfather and if Little Red Riding Hood was a boy instead of a girl.

3. ACTIVITIES LINKED TO THE NARRATION

Theatre:

The moderator lets the children watch a short movie. The movie shows the dance of a grandmother and a grandchild who see each other again after a long time of separation. They are surprised and happy and embrace each other in a dance made of delicate movements.

The children take turns to perform the same scene pretending to be a grandchild and a grandmother (or grandfather – In the workshops in Italy, some of the participating boys did not want to perform the role of a woman). The objective of this activity is to experience tenderness and solidarity.

Drawing:

On a cardboard, the children draw the Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf. They are glued on the drawing of the forest in order to bring them to life.

The moderator closes the session.

Third session



Duration: 1.5 – 2 hours

KEY DETERMINANTS: money, work, protection from violence, power.

Aim: To analyse the story of Hansel and Gretel focusing on risk and protection factors and other elements of the fairy tale that are relevant to the determinants.

1. RETURN TO MONKEY ISLAND

The children are seated in a circle around the moderator. The drawing of Monkey Island hangs on the wall, the monkeys drawn by the children have been added to it and it is decorated with the little flags (adhesive strips) of the determinants.

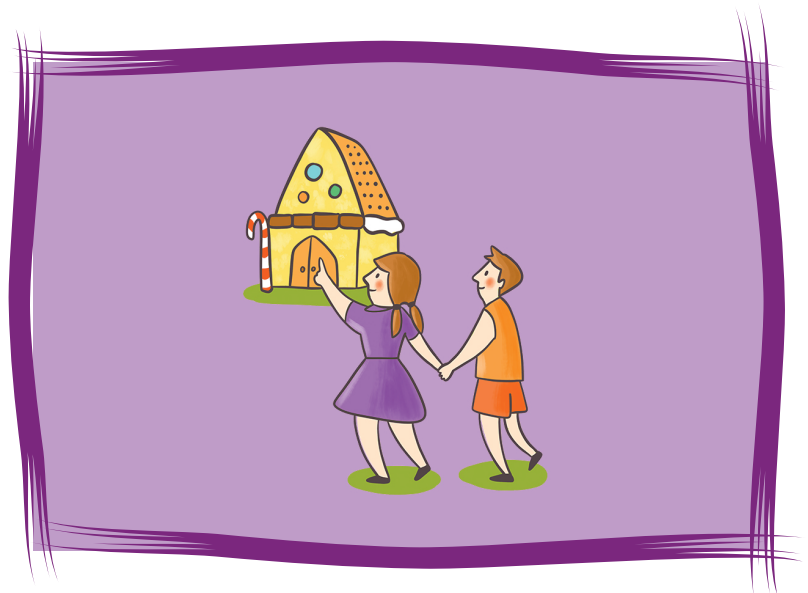
The moderator summarises the key points of the story of Monkey Island, posing questions and prompts to the children to test their memory and how much detail they recall. This exercise helps the moderator to assess if it is possible to use the story as a guide for the analysis of the fairy tale of Hansel and Gretel. (*See second session item 1.*)

2. HANSEL AND GRETEL: PROTECTION AGAINST POVERTY AND NEGLECT

The moderator introduces the fairy tale of Hansel and Gretel through the puppet representing the grumpy old cook. It is read in the original version and told with theatrical expressiveness, using items and objects to attract the attention of the group of children, for instance a handbag with white pebbles representing the treasure that Hansel and Gretel find in the house of the witch. At the end of the story, the moderator asks the children if they have any questions regarding the story.

The children ask for instance if the step-mother and the witch are the same persons. The moderator also asks that the children respond to.

After this brainstorming exercise, a structured discussion follows. The discussion is guided by questions and explanations related to the determinants. For this purpose, the moderator uses the little flags (adhesive strips). Whereas the determinants are written on the front side of the little flags, an opposite term or antonym is written on the back side of each flag:



- 1) Resources (Who has the resources?) – The discussion focuses on economic resources and poverty since the children are abandoned by the parents who do not have enough food for all family members.
- 2) Work (Does someone work? Who does?)

- 3) Power (Who makes decisions? The father? The mother? The children?)
- 4) Protection (Who takes care of whom?) – The parents abandon the children. At the end of the story, Gretel, the girl, finds a way to protect herself and her brother.
- 5) Violence (Who acts in a violent way? Is violence justifiable? Can violence be necessary to protect others or to protect oneself?)

3. ACTIVITIES LINKED TO THE NARRATION

Theatre:

Children are asked, in pairs of two, to perform the scene where Hansel and Gretel are lost in the forest, they are tired, cold and hungry. The children are encouraged to help each other and to guide each other. One child places his or her hands on the shoulders of the other to help him or her find the way... The background music and the light help to create a favourable setting for this exercise.

Game:

As a closing game, the children are asked to sit in a row and help build the sweet little house with colourful candies. One at a time, the children take two or three sweets: one to eat, the other to glue on the shape of a house drawn on a rectangular piece of cardboard. The children are preparing the glue themselves (using flour and water). The candies remain stuck on the cardboard, which will later be used for the booklet that documents the experience.

The moderator closes the session.



Forth session



Duration: 1.5 – 2 hours

KEY DETERMINANTS: work, protection from violence, power.

Aim: To analyse the story of Snow White focusing on risk and protection factors and other elements of the fairy tale that are relevant to the determinants of gender equality.

1. RETURN TO MONKEY ISLAND

The children are seated in a circle around the moderator. The drawing of Monkey Island hangs on the wall, the monkeys drawn by the children have been added to it and it is decorated with the little flags (adhesive strips) of the determinants.

The moderator summarises the key points of the story of Zoe and Elias on Monkey Island, posing questions and prompts to the children to test their memory and how much detail they recall. This exercise helps the moderator to assess if it is possible to use the story as a guide for the analysis of the fairy tale of Snow White. *(See second session item 1.)*

2. SNOW WHITE: WORK AND DECISION-MAKING

The story of Snow White is read out in the original version, with particular attention to the ending of the story in the book of the brothers Grimm. After the reading, the children are invited to watch Disney's cartoon of Snow White, which has a different ending than the original fairy tale.

The video is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=teop-Lj9Ycl>.



3. DISCUSSION

The discussion focuses on the differences between the endings of the two stories, the original one by the brothers Grimm and the Walt Disney cartoon movie.

The moderator guides the children's discussion by posing the following questions:

- Why did Walt Disney change the ending?
- Which ending do you prefer? Why?
- Power: Who has the power? (Have a look at the characters of the Queen and the Prince.)

- Where is Snow White's father?
- Why is the Queen so mean and evil? She has everything she wants – what does she needs?
- Work: What is Snow White's job at the house of the dwarfs? Why does she work there? Who makes decisions? Why did Snow White not go with the dwarfs to work in the mine? Why did she accept to do the household?
- Decision-making: How did the dwarfs make a decision when they discussed whether or not Snow White should remain with them? Let's compare the way the dwarfs are make decisions with the decision-making on Monkey Island!

4. ACTIVITIES LINKED TO THE NARRATION

Theatre:

On the floor, the children build the coffin of Snow White (on a mat). The children who would like to perform Snow White sleeping in the coffin after having eaten the poisoned apple can do so, one at a time. Around the coffin, the other children perform the dwarves and the animals of the forest and, very gently, caress Snow White, barely touching her. A soft music accompanies this moment.

Drawing:

The children are invited to paint in the big book and to colour it through their “caress”: They leave their hand prints with some coloured paint.

The moderator closes the session.



Closing session



The duration depends on the structure of the session and on how much time shall be left for the children's activities. This closing moment is very important in order for the whole path to be meaningful for the children. It can be a celebration where children are protagonists. Some of them may take the floor to report about their experiences, tell about their points of view, about what they liked most or least, and read some articles of the CRC....



The moderator welcomes the children and tells them that this will be the final session of their journey together. The moderator says that Zoe and Elias are now adults. They have studied in order to find out how to make the world a better place. They work together with many other people to make the Land of the Monkeys a reality.

The moderator hands out child-friendly copies of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child so that children can study its articles and values and help promote them so that all children, male and female, can have a good life and develop their potentials according to their free will and skills.

Afterwards, the moderator hands over the big book to the whole class, which has been developed during their journey. It includes the determinants of gender equality and the drawings and installations that relate to the different fairy tales.



The moderator gives the children one of the monkey puppets so that it can be used for class discussions. The puppet shall be a reminder of Monkey Island where all people, children and adults alike, girls and boys, are equal.

TRAINING MODULES

for 5 to 7 year-old children on Gender Equality designed and tested in Bulgaria and Greece

These modules and practical activities were designed to support Bulgarian and Greek teachers and experts who work with 5-7 year-old children. Classic children's tales, popular among children of this age, and instrumental to shaping their life views and beliefs, were used to introduce the topic of equal opportunities for men and women in preschool and primary school education.

These training modules aim to equip kindergarten teachers with practical tools to expand young children's understanding about building healthy relationships, based on mutual respect and esteem between girls and boys. This would help them communicate meaningfully, without acting with aggression and violence.

The draft modules were tested among children from Group Four at the *Fairy Tale* Kindergarten in Targovishte, Bulgaria and 20th Kindergarten in Karditsa, Greece. Further, they were adapted to the specifics of the age group and the pedagogical process at kindergartens. The finalized modules were introduced in the training of children from Groups Three and Four at two kindergartens in Targovishte, Bulgaria - *Fairy Tale* and *March 8th*, at two kindergartens in Karditsa, Greece - 33rd Kindergarten in Karditsa, Greece and Kindergarten of Prodromos, Greece and also at 8th Primary School of Karditsa, Greece.

All materials, needed for the implementation of the modules, can be found on the online platform for teachers and professionals, working with children at the age of 5-7 years - www.fairy-tales.eu

The Training Modules on the topic of Gender Equality, as a tool to developing critical and creative thinking, can convey a lot of messages to children.

Number of children: 25-30.

Key messages:

- * Women and men (girls and boys) are equally capable, knowledgeable and valuable.
- * Women and men (girls and boys) are different, but difference is enriching, not discriminative.
- * Girls and boys may have different interests. Yet the interests they share are more than the ones they don't.
- * Every person is unique, different and valuable!
- * Every child is unique, different and valuable!
- * The control, subordination and favouring one gender over the other is not acceptable and results into violence.
- * Children, women and men have the right to live without violence and to have equal conditions for their personal development and expression.
- * Violence against children is unacceptable. Adults are responsible for protecting children.
- * Power should be used to help others, not to offend and hurt them.
- * It is important for women and men to be equally involved in taking care of their home and family and to have equal time for themselves.
- * Women and men should be equally paid for doing the same type of work.
- * There are good and bad strangers. The good ones, like policemen and teachers, can be asked for help, and the bad ones should be kept at a distance.
- * When girls and boys participate equally in the decision-making, nobody will be at a disadvantage.
- * Children and women are more vulnerable groups and are more likely to be abused, so they need special protection and support.

ONCE UPON A TIME... AN INTRODUCTORY MODULE

Aim: To get children interested in classic fairy tales. To enrich their ideas about the historical, cultural and social roots of classic fairy tales.

Duration: 35 minutes.

Number of Moderators: one.

Materials:

- The Fairy Tale's letter, drafted in advance;
- A four-page booklet, with a copy for each child. Page One introduces the title (*Adventure in the World of Fairy Tales*), accompanied by a picture (a flying book for example), with space left for each child to write down their name. Page Two shows a picture of fairy tales 'coming out of' a box. Page Three offers 12 fields for placing stickers, one for each module. *Adventure Accomplished* is written across Page Four, with a stamp, reading: *And There'll Be No Ending...* ;
- Opening and closing rhymes drafted in advance to frame the beginning and end of each activity: they are short and rhythmic, with contents linked to how children experience fairy tales;
- A hat.



Arrangements: Arrange a circle of three-legged stools inside the activity room, one for each child and an extra one for the moderator. An alternative arrangement may be used, with children, sitting on the ground around the moderator, seated on a three-legged stool.

Instructions:

1. Introduction: Introduce yourself and tell the children a little bit about your work.
2. Setting the framework: Suggest opening and closing rhymes to frame the beginning and end of each activity and add that children will learn more about where fairy tales come from. Quote the opening rhyme to start the activity.
3. A Short History of Fairy Tales: Tell the children that you have a special letter written for them. Take out a rolled or enveloped colored paper letter and read it.

I am the Fairy Tale,

And I am writing this letter to tell you what brought me into this world, and to you. I was born two thousand years ago among people and we have been living together ever since. My first visit was to the primitive people living in caves. They would gather around the fire, telling each other marvelous stories about dwarfs, trolls and giants. The more I got to know these people, the stronger their interest in me became.

As time went by I started visiting colourful fairs: princes and princesses, fairies and mermaids, sorcerers and wizards joined in as my new characters and my beauty grew with them. Children loved me dearly. They would leave their tricks aside to get round silver-tongued old ladies who knew the most exciting fairy tales from all over the world. The old ladies would sit on three-legged stools, with all the children getting together around them to listen.

I would tell them stories about girls and boys growing up, facing challenges and getting over their fears. I kept helping them learn how to face up to difficulties in life, to tell good from bad, right from wrong, to pursue love and accept loss. Some of my stories felt real, others were full of incredible things happening, everything was possible, and every wish came true.

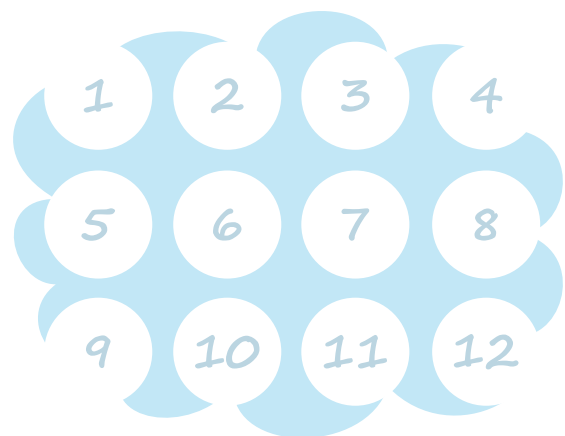
Later on, the first people who could write came along and they started writing down the stories and putting them together in books. Artists started drawing pictures. With time the books with fairy tales became ever more beautiful, more interesting and colourful. Parents started reading me to their children at home, and teachers - reading me to them at school. This is how I finally came to you. I have been with many people from all over the world, I've become part of their childhood and helped them grow up. I will be happy to spend the year together so that I can tell you some of the most loved fairy tales. I have a special gift for each of you & a booklet of fairy tales. But first things first, I would love to learn more about you. I would like each of you to tell me your name, the name of your favourite fairy tale character and why you like them.



4. Ask the children, willing to do the task, to raise their hands. Give the hat in turn to each volunteer, ask them to put it on their head and say their name, the name of their favourite fairy tale character and why they like them. Follow the rule that only the child with the hat on can speak.
5. **A mark of distinction:** Give a booklet to each child and explain that this is a special magic booklet, made especially for the children that will take part in a marvelous adventure into the world of fairy tales. Ask them to bring it each time they join the adventure, so that they could place the special activity sticker they will be given. In the end, when they will have gathered all activity stickers, their booklet will be stamped with the *Adventure Accomplished* stamp.



Adventure Accomplished



6. Wrap-up: Quote the closing rhymes.

Opening Rhymes

We've got the books to work the magic,
To read though stories fun and tragic
While finding far-off lands with every line.
Let's get this started: "Once upon a time..."

Closing Rhymes

It's time for us to say good bye,
Yet briefly so you needn't cry.
We've finished with the story for today.
We'll have another for you any day.



1. THE THINGS CHILDREN LIKE?!

Aim: To encourage children to think about the activities that girls and boys share.

Fairy Tale: *The Snow Queen*

Duration: 40 minutes.

Number of Moderators: two.

Materials:

- 3 large sheets of flip chart paper; scotch tape and glue;
- 2 sets of sample pictures, showing different activities;
- 2 A4-sized pictures of Gerda and Kai.



Arrangements:

Read *The Snow Queen* to the children before the start of activity. Highlight the key moments in the story line and their characteristics, as well as the life lessons of the fairy tale. Use the flip chart sheets to draw two identical circles and a larger one on them. Write *What Girls Like* and *What Boys Like* inside the identical ones and *What Children Like* in the larger one. Print out two identical sets of pictures showing:

- a pot of flowers;
- a bicycle;
- a book of fairy tales;
- a paintbrush with paints;
- a baby doll with a pacifier;
- a ladle;
- a pair of ballet pointe shoes;
- a soccer ball;
- an automat gun toy;
- a toy truck.

Other pictures linked to *The Snow Queen* or the children's daily routine may be used as well.

Instructions:

1. Remind the children that tale is about a girl and a boy, Gerda and Kai, both of children very much like them: it's about the different things that they enjoy doing, like playing together, listening to the fairy tales that Grandma reads to them. Add that the task today is to make a list of all the things that boys and girls like doing.



2. Divide the group into two smaller ones: Gerda's team (just girls) and Kai's team (just boys). Give the girls the printout with Gerda's picture, a full set of the printouts with the other pictures and the flip-chart sheet with *What Girls Like*, written inside the circle. Give the boys the printout with Kai's picture, a full set of the printouts with the other pictures and the flip-chart sheet with *What Boys Like*, written inside the circle. Show them the pictures of Gerda and Kai and explain that they are the characters from *The Snow Queen*. Ask both groups to choose the pictures that best describe what girls/boys like doing. When everyone in a group agrees to choose a certain picture, they glue it to the circle.

3. Continue working within the two smaller groups, so that each group is assisted by a moderator. Show each of the pictures in the set and explain its meaning. For example:

- a pot of flowers – growing flowers;
- a book of fairy tales – reading/listening to fairy tales;
- a soccer ball – playing football;
- a baby doll with a pacifier – playing with dolls/taking care of them;
- a bicycle - cycling;
- a paintbrush with paints – drawing;
- a ladle – cooking/help with cooking;
- a pair of ballet pointe shoes – ballet dancing;
- a toy truck – driving;
- an automat gun toy – playing soldiers.

Ask the girls/boys if they like these activities or play with these items. Make sure that a picture is glued to the circle only when everyone agrees on the item/activity it shows. Let the children discuss their differences and opinions before coming to an agreement.

4. Present results: invite both groups back into the large group as they finish their work in the smaller ones. Ask children to say what pictures they've chosen and why.

5. Overlaps: Take the flip-chart sheet with *What Children Like?* written inside the larger circle and place it on the wall. Explain that pictures chosen by both the boys and the girls will be glued inside the circle. Start going through each of the pictures chosen and ask questions like *Do girls like?/Do boys like...too?* Whenever all children agree, take the two identical pictures glued inside the smaller circles and place them inside the larger one. When you have moved all identical pictures from the smaller circles into the larger one, sum up the things/activities that the children in the large group like doing.

6. Tell the children that there are many things that girls and boys like doing. Turn their attention to the idea that even though there are some differences, still all children enjoy doing certain things. Explain that different children have different skills and talents to do different things and that they should not be limited to do what they like. Tell them that it is more interesting when they all do things and play games together. Remind them what good friends Gerda and Kai are in the fairy tale and how brave Gerda is when saving her friend Kai. Encourage children to be together and be friends, to care for each other.



2.1. WHAT IS VIOLENCE?

Aim: To improve children's understanding about different types of violence, including emotional violence and negligence.

Fairy Tale: *Cinderella*

Duration: 40 minutes.

Number of Moderators: one

Materials:

- a pair of sticks for each child and for the Moderator: a green one with a smiling face glued to it, and a red one with a crying face glued to it;
- 2 pictures, one of Cinderella and one for the Prince;
- 8 pictures of wizards – 4 wizardesses and 4 wizards.



Arrangements:

Read *Cinderella* to the children before the start of activity. Highlight the key moments in the story line and their characteristics, as well as the life lessons of the fairy tale.

Use drinking straws to prepare the sticks: for each stick print out 2 green circles with a smiling face inside, and 2 red ones with a crying face. Glue them to each side of the green and red straws respectively. Feel free to invite the children in the process as long as you provide them with materials and give them appropriate instructions.

Instructions:

1. Remind the children that the tale is about a girl who feels miserable at home, because nobody loves her, or cares about her feelings and needs, but they all make her feel humiliated and left behind. Tell them that sometimes children may feel miserable because of the way other children or adults treat them. Explain that violence may come in different shapes like kicking or pushing, but also insulting, humiliating, not getting enough food or clothing. Tell them that you can spot violence when children feel miserable, have bruises over their body or feel emotional pain, and maybe are forced to do things. Add that children may become the victims of violence because other children, adults or even somebody close to them like, their parents or family, treats them badly. Use Cinderella as an example: she is insulted and humiliated, no one takes proper care of her and she is forced to do things that children can't, like cleaning and cooking. Tell the children that they will learn to understand when violence happens. Explain the rules of the game: tell them that the two characters in the story, Cinderella and the Prince are still children and have to experience different situations. Add that they can help them by alerting them about different dangers. Tell them to guess about each of the situations they hear about: for each correct answer Cinderella and the Prince will get a guardian with magical powers (the pictures of wizards).

2. Tell the children, seated in a circle around you, that they will hear about children experiencing different situations, and then they will have to vote. If they feel that children are experiencing violence,



then they should raise the red stick, and if not – the green one. Show them how to do it, using your set. Start reading and at the end of each case, pause and invite the children to vote. Count the number of red and green sticks raised and announce the results. Raise one of your sticks to show them the correct answer. Briefly explain why this particular case shows children experiencing violence. Repeat with the next case and go through at least 8 cases. Place a picture of a character with magic powers next to the pictures of Cinderella or the Prince respectively, whenever the correct answers outnumber the wrong ones (alternate the pictures of wizards and wizardesses).

Read the following instructions aloud, following the order in which they appear on the list:

Can you imagine...

- **...Cinderella, staying alone at home, locked up for a full day and night.** *Explain that parents are responsible for their children's safety and until they have reached a certain age it is not safe to leave them alone at home. Hint: (There is violence because something bad may happen at home and the child may not be able to get out safe or the child left on his/her own may do something dangerous and get hurt).*
- **... the Prince messing up his room and then being punished for doing it by the King who won't let him watch TV.** *Explain that parents set rules for children that work in their interest. Hint (This seems like something unpleasant, but there is no violence, nobody hurts the child. Besides, parents sometimes set certain rules and limits. If this is not a threat to the child's health and life, and keeps his/her dignity intact, then it is not violence).*
- **...Cinderella tied up to her bed to keep her away from the ball.** *Explain that physical punishment is violence. Hints: (This is violence, because the child is in a harmful situation and feels pain, cannot move freely and his/her freedom is violated).*
- **... Cinderella's sisters shouting to her all the time and calling her names (like dirty, ugly and stupid).** *Explain that in addition to physical violence, there's emotional violence as well. Hint: (This is violence because Cinderella feels miserable when insulted, full of shame and guilt).*
- **... the Prince walking the dog in the mornings and the evenings without wanting to.** *Explain that as they grow up children should start sharing family responsibilities. Hint: (This is not violence. Quite often children love pets and want to have them at home. This is why they have to take care of their pet. Walking your dog may be real fun).*
- **... Cinderella, kept at home instead of playing outside, until she finally puts her toys back to their places.** *Explain that children have duties. Hint: (This is not violence, because children have their own responsibilities. When they finish playing, they should put their toys back to their places. They could do this on their own, and they should. When children behave responsibly, they first put their toys back to their places and then have enough time to play outside).*
- **... the Prince being slapped by the King for breaking a glass.** *Explain that nobody is allowed to hurt children. Hint: (This is violence, because the Prince hurts. Children make mistakes, but hitting them, pushing them, tying them up is abusive and it hurts children).*
- **... the Prince being forced to wear old, dirty, rugged clothes, with everyone hardly noticing him.** *Explain that negligence is a form of violence. Hint: (This is violence because the Prince feels self-conscious, and ashamed, fearing others will want to avoid him. Adults should do their best to make sure that children stay well-fed and dressed, clean and healthy).*
- **... Cinderella being sent to beg in the street, then bringing the money back home.** *Explain that this is illegal. Hint: (This is violence because children should go to kindergarten and do the things children like doing, not earn money. Apart from that, begging will make children feel ashamed and miserable, not to mention that they may get hurt).*





- **... the King, not letting the Prince go to school.** *Explain that children have to go to school until they reach a certain age. Hint: (This is violence because adults should send their children to school. If the Prince doesn't go to school he won't learn how to read, and write, how to do math calculations and be fit for work as he gets out of school. Education is quite important to children and helps them become skilled and knowledgeable, and develop their resources as adults).*
- **... Cinderella forced to get married to someone she doesn't want to.** *Explain that this is a crime. Hint: (This is violence, because children can't get married, only adults can. When people get married they engage in certain activities: they keep the household running, they work to earn money, have children and take care of them, they do the things that adults do).*
- **... the Prince's friends threatening not to play together anymore and beating him up unless he joins their crowd and starts throwing stones at cars.** *Explain that some children may get violent and abuse others. Hint: (This is violence because the Prince will get scared that they will beat him up. He will be forced to behave badly and may be hurt as a result. Those who make him throw stones cannot be true friends, because that's not what friends make you do: they don't make you do bad and dangerous things).*
- **... Cinderella cleaning the place each time she comes in with dirty shoes.** *Explain that as they grow children should learn how to help with the housework. Hint: (This is not violence. All of us, adults and children alike, we have own responsibilities to keep our homes clean and tidy. Parents cannot do everything on their own and will get really tired if they do, this is why children should help with cleaning their room or setting a table for meals together. In this way they will finish the work faster and have more time for fun).*
- **...the Prince beaten up each time his parents find out that he has hit another child at the kindergarten.** *Explain that physical violence is unacceptable. Hint: (This is violence because the prince gets hurt. Children make mistakes and adults should talk to children and help them understand what is right and wrong, and they can't beat them up, instead. Hurting children is violence).*
- **... an older boy, kissing and hugging Cinderella, while she is trying to free herself, because she doesn't want him to.** *Explain that violating someone's personal space is not acceptable. Hint: (This is violence, because Cinderella feels miserable doing something she doesn't want to. Kissing and hugging someone is good only if it feels the same for the other person. If not, and you force him/her because s/he wants to free herself/himself, this is violence).*
- **... the Prince, without his new bike, because his parents don't have enough money to get it.** *Explain that child care is not about giving children everything they want to have. Hint: (This is not violence. Children can't have anything they want. Children have many dreams and wishes, and even if they want to, parents won't be able to make them all come true).*
- **... Cinderella, threatened that she won't get any food if she complains about being abused at home.** *Explain that threats can seriously harm children and keep them from seeking help. Hint: (This is violence, because Cinderella will feel afraid to talk freely and ask for help. And in the end things will get even harder for her).*
- **.... the Prince helping his mother cook dinner.** *Explain that as they grow up children should start helping their parents with chores. Hint: (This isn't violence, because it is a good idea to have everyone at home do their share of the housework. Children shouldn't be given difficult tasks that they find hard to complete or that are not safe enough, but they could definitely help with simple tasks like helping to prepare dinner. It's easier when there is an adult around, making sure there would be no harm done to the child).*





3. Activity Wrap-up: Tell the children that sometimes they may be in danger and become victims of violence that may not only hurt them physically, but make them suffer emotional pain, and feel ashamed and miserable. Children may get hurt when doing unusual things, like the things adults do. Give Cinderella as an example. Explain that children may get hurt by strangers or by people close to them, because children are vulnerable and weaker than adults. Children are not to blame for what may happen to them when they are in danger: it is the responsibility of adults to protect them.



2.2. WHO IS THE TRUE PRINCE?

Aim: To offer a positive role model for the children to follow and to teach them how power and authority may be used to give support to and take care of others.

Fairy tale: Cinderella

Duration: 40 minutes

Number of Moderators: one/preferably two

Materials:

- 1 doll for Cinderella as the Princess
- 2 dolls for the Prince



Instructions:

1. Remind the children that in the previous module they talked about different forms of violence. Invite them to list as many as they can remember, giving examples with Cinderella and the Prince and how they felt hurt, insulted and miserable. Tell them that even when someone is stronger, they may choose to use their power to help and do good deeds, instead of being violent.

Explain that in this activity the children will have to help Cinderella in her life as a Princess. Show them the doll and tell them that she is quite confused, because there are two Princes who want to get married to her. One of them is the True Prince. You can tell him from the other one, because he is kind-hearted, brave, generous, eager to help people in need and protect the weak. The other Prince only pretends to be one: he is strong, but keeps hurting others, mocking and insulting them.

2. Arrange the room as if it is a theatre, set up an area for the stage and another one for the audience. Ask the children to sit in the audience. Take the two dolls for the Prince and role-play the two Princes. If you work on your own, role-play both of them.

3. Describe 4 activities for each Prince, each time starting off with the line *I am the true Prince*. There are four statements for each Prince, each set challenging or respectively asserting gender stereotypes.

Statements for the True Prince:

1. I am the true Prince. I am a strong man and I won't let Cinderella do the housework on her own. I will help her clean, cook and tidy up the house.

2. I am the true Prince. All the food, carriages, clothes and diamonds in the kingdom belong to me. Some of them I will give away, so that there are no poor and hungry people.

3. I am the true Prince. If someone attacks me in the street I will tell them that I am strong and I won't get into a fight with them. Only losers do.

4. I am the true Prince. If Cinderella wants me to get married to her, I will. I will respect her and we will make decisions together.



Statements for the False Prince:

1. I am the true Prince. I am a strong man and I will give orders to Cinderella to do all the housework on her own: cleaning, cooking, tidying up the house.
2. I am the true Prince. All the food, carriages, clothes and diamonds in the kingdom belong to me. If anyone dares to touch them, I will give orders to punish him.
3. I am the true Prince. If anyone attacks me in the street I will fight back.
4. I am the true Prince. I will get married to Cinderella, no matter if she wants me or not. I will train her to obey me and to follow my orders.

Present the first two statements for each Prince and invite the children to stand by the side of the true Prince. Ask them to explain why Cinderella would choose this Prince: use the doll for Cinderella and instruct the children to take turns as they pass it on. Only the child holding the doll can give their reasons. Explain who is the true Prince and give your reasons. Ask the children to go back to their places. Continue with the next two statements, following the same instructions. At the end of this activity invite the children to congratulate each other for a task well-done and for helping Cinderella to find out who is just pretending to be a Prince, but in fact isn't.

4. Wrap-up: Invite the children to list the positive characteristics of the true Prince. Highlight his noble disposition, his willingness to help the weak, his refusal to get into fights and his respect for girls.



3. FAMILY

Aim: To introduce a model of gender equality regarding family and home care.

The Fairy Tale: The Little Red Riding Hood

Duration: 35 minutes

Number of Moderators: one.



Materials:

- Scotch tape and/or glue tubes;
- A flip-chart sheet of paper, with two columns on it: a picture of the Little Red Riding Hood's mother is placed on top of the first one, and a picture of the Hunter – on top of the other. There are 8 empty circles drawn inside each of the columns.
- 10 pictures, showing different family activities¹ (a brief description of the activities shown in the pictures are added in brackets, at the end of each entry; the moderator may use them to explain the pictures to the children):
 - a tree garden (pruning)
 - a lawn mower (mowing)
 - a set of tools (repairing the broken stove)
 - a Shop (shopping)
 - a container (garbage disposal)
 - toys (The Little Red Riding Hood game)
 - a stove (cooking)
 - a washing machine and a laundry basket (washing and drying clothes)
 - dirty dishes (washing dishes)
 - grandparents (caring for the elderly in the family)
- 6 pictures, showing pastime activities² (a brief description of the activities shown in the pictures are added in brackets, at the end of each entry; the moderator may use them to explain the pictures to the children):
 - a cafe with tables (going out with friends)
 - fitness equipment (workout)
 - a book (reading books)
 - a cinema hall (going to the movies with friends)
 - a TV set (watching TV)

¹ In the upper left corner of the picture is put a distinctive mark of the group of activities in the family, an orange circle for example

² In the upper left corner of the picture is put a distinctive mark for the group of activities in the free time, a green circle for example



Arrangements:

Read *The Little Red Riding Hood* to the children before the start of activity. Highlight the key moments in the story line and their characteristics, as well as the life lessons of the fairy tale.

Instructions:

1. Remind the children that the tale is about a little girl, living with her mother. The mother takes care of her and her old grandmother. Explain that family is the topic of today's activity. Present the family as people who are related to each other and invite the children to give examples. Tell them that running a family is about doing certain things so that everybody feels good about being part of the family, like being well-fed and dressed, staying clean and healthy. There's also some free time left when everybody can do things they enjoy doing, like sports, walking, meeting friends.

2. Assigning Roles: Show the flip-chart sheet and explain that this is the family of the Little Red Riding Hood, the mother and the father. Running a family is about working hard, but when the work is done, there's room for some interesting leisure time activities as well. Both the mother and the father, shown by the two columns, have certain responsibilities, shown by the circles inside the columns: ask the children to assign different tasks as well as leisure activities to the mother and the father, and place them in the respective circles. Tell them to start with activities taking care of the family, because they are quite important and should come first, and then continue with the leisure activities. Explain the rule: none of them should get more activities than the number of circles inside the columns. Present the pictures showing the different activities one by one, starting with the housework and moving on to leisure activities. Make sure the children decide who will do each of the activities. Encourage them to discuss the pictures and when they agree on the picture, it is placed in one of the circles inside the mother's or the father's column. If all the circles in one of the columns are taken before assigning all the tasks, explain that this character has no free time left and the other one will have to do the rest of the work or fill up his/her time with leisure activities.

3. Rearranging: When the children are finished with distributing the 16 pictures, tell them what the mother and the father do for their family and their home and what are the things they do for themselves. The children can visually grasp the balance between pictures marked in orange and green circles for each of the mother/father columns. Invite them to rearrange if there is need to strengthen the balance between housework and leisure time. Discuss why this is important for the family.

4. Activity Wrap-up: Sum up that it is a good idea to have men and women participate equally in the housework and have equal amounts of time left to devote to activities that they enjoy doing.



4. WHEN I GROW UP

Aim: To offer positive role models showing different professional activities and challenging gender stereotyping.

Fairy Tale: The Sleeping Beauty

Duration: 40 minutes.

Number of Moderators: one.



Materials:

- a glue tube for each child;
- identical female cardboard cutouts of the Sleeping Beauty, dressed in tank tops and underpants, (one for each child);
- identical male cardboard cutouts of the Prince, dressed in tank tops and underpants, (one for each child);
- sets of work clothing, two for each child, featuring male/female clothing for school teachers, doctors, kindergarten teachers, builders, cooks, firefighters, and cleaners. The clothing may be cut out and attached to the cardboard figures of the Sleeping Beauty and the Prince, so that they 'get dressed';
- 2 large cardboard sheets, with 6 horizontal lines drawn on each one. Two pictures are placed on top of each sheet: one for the Sleeping Beauty and another one for the Prince (both of them suggestive of the fairy tale).

Arrangements:

Read *The Sleeping Beauty* to the children before the start of activity. Highlight the key moments in the story line and their characteristics, as well as the life lessons of the fairy tale. Introduce the 6 professions that the children are going to work with. Let them look through the work clothing (cut out in advance) and highlight key aspects of each profession for them.

Instructions:

1. Remind the children that the fairy tale was written long time ago and turn their attention to the specific activities performed by men and women in the fairy tale, quoting the story 'governesses, court ladies, maids, guards, guardsmen, soldiers, housekeepers, horsemen, cooks, servants, footmen and farm workers'. Tell them that today people have professions and invite them to share their choice for their future profession and give their reasons.

2. Ask the children to imagine that the Sleeping Beauty has slept for a very long time, so long that her story with the Prince starts unfolding today. They need to help them choose their professions. Remind the children about the professions that they have reviewed in advance. Avoid using grammatical gender when presenting professions: refer to the cleaner as a person who does the cleanup instead.



3. Choice of profession: Invite children to work individually. Provide a male and female cardboard cutouts and 2 sets of work clothing for each child. Ask them to choose just one piece of clothing for Cinderella, and another one for the Prince and to glue them to the cardboard cutouts. Invite them back to the circle when finished.

4. Discussion: Ask the children to show their figures and explain their reasons for choosing a particular work clothing for the Sleeping Beauty and the Prince, (and the respective professions linked to them). Divide the figures presented by the children by professions and put them on the two cardboard sheets (one for Cinderella and one for the Prince) Praise the achievement of each child. Turn their attention to the question „Are there professions that they chose for Cinderella or the prince in particular, and are there professions that were not chosen at all?“

5. Activity Wrap-up: Present a number of professions performed by both men and women, using multimedia. Remind the children that the fairy tale goes back to times long gone, when women were mostly busy taking care of others, like being childminders, servants, cooks. They used to spend most of their time at home and couldn't read or write, didn't go to school or have interesting professions. Add that today's girls and boys go to the kindergarten together, study at school and share common knowledge and skills. They can complete assignments equally well, they are brave, full of courage and ideas. This is why there are no reasons to believe that certain professions should be performed by men or women only. Turn their attention to the fact that both girls and boys can dream about space explorations, protecting people, fighting fires, teaching children, treating patients, singing and dancing. They could perform together in any professional area. Tell them that it is important for everyone to have the opportunity to become what they want to, to choose a profession that they like and that will help them develop their abilities.



5. A BRAVE HEART

Aim: To introduce and challenge some of the most widely spread gender bias.

Fairy tale: The Snow Queen

Duration: 40 minutes.

Number of Moderators: one.

Materials:

- 4 traffic lights model sets: only the top circle is coloured (red light) on two of them, only the bottom circle is coloured (green light) on the other two;
- 2 figures of the Snow Queen;
- 2 figures of Gerda;
- 2 flip-chart sheets;
- 2 rolls of scotch tape;
- 2 pairs of scissors;
- 30 paper circles with a snowflake on the one side and a heart on the other.
- 15 questions: the correct answer to some of the them may be visualized, particularly to questions about professions and occupations.
 - Is it true that women can drive a truck? (True);
 - Is it true that men can be children's teachers? (True);
 - Is it true that women can be soldiers? (True);
 - Is it true that men can cook? (True);
 - Is it true that women can fly a plane? (True);
 - Is it true that men can help with household chores? (True);
 - Is it true that girls can do mischief? (True);
 - Is it true that fathers can feed a baby? (True);
 - Is it true that girls are more obedient than boys? (False);
 - Is it true that only women can clean the house? (False);
 - Is it true that only boys can wear blue clothes? (False);
 - Is it true that there is no need for girls to go to kindergarten / school? (False);
 - Is it true that girls can't play football? (False);
 - Is it true that girls paint better than boys? (False);
 - Is it true that only girls cry? (False).





Arrangements:

Two traffic lights model sets (one with the red light on and another one with the green light on) are placed at the two corners of the room. The figures of the Snow Queen and Gerda are placed on the flip chart paper right next to them. The 15 circles showing the snowflakes are arranged around the figure of the Snow Queen.

Instructions:

1. Remind the children the fairy tale about the Snow Queen.

2. Turn their attention to the character of Gerda, getting over difficulties, staying brave and strong, fearless, and never giving up on her friend. Tell the children that Gerda needs their help to save Kai from the Snow Queen. Show them the figure of the Snow queen, and the snowflakes around her and tell them she is quite powerful and that her power comes from the snowflakes. Show the figure of Gerda next and tell them that they will be game where they will have to answer some questions. Each correct answer they give will turn a snowflake into a heart and Gerda will gather her strength, while the queen will become weaker. The end result is to turn as many flakes into hearts as possible so that Gerda can finally save Kai.

3. Teamwork: Divide the large group into two teams (mixed boys and girls). Invite each team to choose a name and line up, one team member after the other. Read out the list of questions, pausing after each one to let the two teams discuss and make a decision. Instruct the first two players on the line for each team to go to one of the street lights model sets depending on the answer they have chosen (green light for true answers, red light for false ones). Announce the correct answer and show the relevant slide on the presentation. For each correct answer take a snowflake, turn it with its face down to turn into a heart and place it next to Gerda's figure. Ask each child who has given an answer to line up at the back. Continue playing until all questions are answered.

4. End result: Congratulate the children on how they helped Gerda save her friend Kai.

5. Wrap-up: Tell the children that using what they know they seriously helped Gerda and she finally made it. Encourage the groups for answering the questions correctly and for spotting the wrong answers, (like the one about the girls crying and the boys wearing blue clothes). Turn their attention to the fact that girls – just like boys – can be brave, strong and devoted. Add that *The Snow Queen* shows a brave, devoted, fearless girl, getting through great difficulties to save her friend Kai.



6. I WANT, I CAN, I HAVE TO

Aim: To introduce children rights and duties in the family regarding training, health, food, relationships with adults and with other children.

Fairy Tale: Rapunzel

Duration: 35 minutes.

Number of Moderators: one.

Materials:

- A presentation;
- A picture of Rapunzel.

Arrangements:

Read *Rapunzel* to the children before the start of activity. Highlight the key moments in the story line and their characteristics, as well as the life lessons of the fairy tale. A presentation on Children's Rights.

Instructions:

1. Explain that Rapunzel is a child and has the right not to be harmed, restricted or held against her will, to be taken care of, to have fun, and to meet other children. Add that all children have rights and adults must ensure that they are respected. Use the tale as an example to show the children how Rapunzel's parents failed to protect her and deprived her of her childhood, and how the other adult, the Witch, pretending to protect the girl, in fact abused her - keeping her locked up, cutting her hair, taking her into the woods and leaving her alone there. Explain that the topic of this activity is the rights and responsibilities of children.

2. Presentation: Go through the slides and explain each one using language easy to understand and examples close to their everyday life.

3. Discussion: Place the picture of Rapunzel in front of the children and following the slides of the presentation open up a discussion about the key rights and responsibilities of children in general, and Rapunzel in particular.

4. Activity Wrap-up: Tell the children that both adults and children have rights and responsibilities. Highlight the equal rights of boys and girls. Explain that adults have to be responsible for keeping children healthy, in training, with opportunities for fun activities, and away from danger and violence. Finally they have to make sure that children's opinion is respected. These rights are written down in important documents and many institutions guarantee their observance, like the police, the school and the kindergarten, the social services, the doctors and others. If children's rights are violated and someone hurts them, by not letting them to go to school, not giving them food, not taking them to a doctor, these institutions must be informed and must intervene to help the child, stop the violence and punish the perpetrator. Explain that if their rights are violated by other children, by strangers or by family members, they should share this with an adult they trust and ask for help.



7. A CHOCOLATE FACTORY

Aim: To encourage children to think critically about gender pay gap.

Fairy Tale: Puss in Boots

Duration: 35 minutes + 30 minutes.

Number of Moderators: two



Materials:

- 2 crowns with a picture of Puss in Boots, drawn on each one;
- a crown for each child, with a picture of a cooking hat drawn on it;
- a crown for each child, with a picture of a toy car/truck drawn on it;
- a crown for each child, with a picture of a sweet shop drawn on it;
- 90 pieces of paper clover;
- A4-sized sheets with chocolates drawn on them (4 chocolates per sheet), to be cut out and colored;
- small scissors;
- brown pencils;
- glue tubes;
- envelopes;
- 2 large toy cars /trucks;
- 2 boxes;
- 2 flip-chart sheets.

Arrangements:

Read *Puss in Boots* to the children before the start of activity. Highlight the key moments in the story line and their characteristics, as well as the life lessons of the fairy tale.

Arrange two rows of work tables, with four tables in each row. Place the 2 crowns, with the picture of Puss in Boots drawn on them and the flip-chart papers on the first two tables. Place the crowns, with the cooking hat on them, the sheets with the chocolates on them, the small pairs and the brown pencils on the second two tables. Place the crowns with the cars/trucks on them, the envelopes and the glue tubes on the third two tables and the crowns with the sweet shop on them, the boxes and the paper clovers on the last two tables.

Instructions:

1. Explain that in the fairy tale the cat helps his master – the poor boy – to become a Prince, because being a Prince is about being rich, having a large house (castle), lands and woods, and getting married to the princess. Tell the children that long time ago men owned lands, woods and houses, because even if they were not born princes and kings, they went to work and earned money. Women took care of their homes, children, elderly and sick relatives, they didn't go to work, weren't educated and in



most of the cases didn't have any possessions. Add that this have changed and, in our time, both women and men go to work, and are well- educated, yet there is still certain imbalance of wealth and status. Sum up that the topic today will be payments that women and men receive for their work. Announce the Chocolate factory game and tell the children that after Puss in Boots helped his master become a Prince, he became free to do whatever he pleased. And this is how he decided to open a Chocolate factory.

2. Setting up the factory. Ask the children to choose a boy and a girl who become Puss in Boots and own two chocolate factories. Tell them to put on the crowns with the picture of the cat on it and sit at the first table of each row. Ask the two owners of the chocolate factories that their first task is to choose their workers. Divide the rest of the children equally between the following professions: cooks, drivers and sweet shop assistants. (e.g. in a group of 24 children, each factory will have 12 workers, 4 of them cooks, 4 drivers and 4 sweet shop assistants) Invite the two owners to take turns and choose their workers, alternating each time between boys and girls and starting with the cooks, moving on to the drivers and finishing off with the sweet shop assistants. Invite the two groups of cooks to sit around the tables on the second row, the two groups of drivers – around the ones on the next row, and the sweet shop assistants around the tables on the last row.

3. Factories in operation. Explain the rules of the game: as you signal the start of the game, the two factories start working. Cooks have to cut out and colour the chocolates and pass them to the drivers. The drivers have to put them in envelopes, load them on trucks and transport them to the sweet shop assistants. The sweet shop assistants have to open the envelopes and place the chocolates inside the boxes. They will get three paper clovers for each boxed chocolate and give them to the factory owner. The factory owners glue the paper clovers to the flip chart. Allow 10-15 minutes for this game and then announce the end.

A BREAK

4. Discussion in groups: Invite each factory owner (Puss in Boots) to gather together his/her workers and sit in a circle. Join each circle taking the role of financial advisors: count the paper clovers and put aside a certain number. Explain that the factory owner (Puss in Boots) has to pay for utilities, buy cacao and milk to make more chocolates and get paid for his/her work.

Next, advise them how to distribute the remaining paper clovers among all the workers: suggest that boys should be better paid, giving absurd reasons like: the boys in the groups of cooks should get more than the girls, because their hair is shorter; the boys in the group of drivers should get more money than the girls, because their clothes are darker in colour; the boys in the group of the shop assistants should be better paid than the girls because they don't wear earrings. After each absurd suggestion ask the children if they agree, if this is fair and why. Invite a discussion in the group, so that the children have the chance to decide that paper clovers should be evenly distributed among workers who did the same type of task. Explain that both the girls and the boys were equally important for the factory operation, that they completed the same tasks and should get in return an equal number of paper clovers. Tell them that the length of their hair, and the colour of their clothes can't make any difference in this case because they all had the same tasks to complete.

5. Activity Wrap-up: Invite both groups to get back to the large group. Praise the two owners - he boy and the girl – for their excellent work. Next, congratulate the workers from the two factories. Announce the number of paper clovers that they have gathered and add that at the end of the game both factories succeeded in distributing them fairly among the boys and the girls. Tell the children that there are cases when women get paid less than men, even though they do the same type of work, and this is not fair. Add that the boys and the girls worked together in the chocolate factories and achieved success.



8. ATTENTION! DANGER!

Aim: To introduce specifics in the communication with peers and adults, to develop children's skills for spotting and avoiding/getting over risks

Fairy Tale: The Wolf and the Seven Little Goats

Duration: 45 minutes

Number of Moderators: one

Materials:

- a crown of little horns for each child;
- a poster, showing three different situations - at home, on the playground, at the kindergarten. Each presents a few pictures, with a blank circle next to each picture.
 - At home: a child is home alone, with three figures behind the front door (a young woman, a man, a grandmother);
 - On the playground: featuring a policeman, a kindergarten teacher, a woman with an ice-cream, a man in a car;
 - At the kindergarten: showing two children fighting over a toy; a child trying hard to hug another, two children holding hands.
- an A4-sized sheet of paper for each child, showing the three situations from the poster, with an empty circle next to each picture;
- red and green markers;
- a red and a green pencil for each child.

Arrangements:

Read *The Wolf and the Seven Little Goats* to the children before the start of activity. Highlight the key moments in the story line and their characteristics, as well as the life lessons of the fairy tale.

Instructions:

1. Explain that in this fairy tale the seven little goats were tricked by the bad wolf and when they let him in their home he ate them up. It was just the youngest that hid so well, that the wolf couldn't find it and it stayed alive. Tell them that children may get involved in different situations at home, at the kindergarten or outside, and some of them may be dangerous, particularly if there isn't an adult around to help them. Add that the topic today will be about dangerous situations and how to stay away from them. Invite the children to put on the crowns with the little horns and take the role of the youngest little goat from the Fairy Tale, the smartest one who learnt how to save itself from the wolf. Continue that this time the wolf has found a wizard to turn him into a human being and as a result he





could turn into a young or an adult person, a man or a woman. As he found out how powerful the magic is, the wolf was quite pleased that this time nobody could recognize him for who he really was. He got back home and took his child, the little wolf, with him. The little wolf was turned into a human child.

2. Task presentation: Show the flip chart and explain that the wolf and his little one wants to trick a child and eat him/her up. The task that the youngest and the smartest little goat is facing this time is to spot the dangerous situations shown in pictures. In those situations there are the wolf and his little one hidden behind the images of adults and children. Ask the children to spot them first and then to colour in red the empty circles next to these situations, and in green the empty circles next to the safe situations where there isn't any danger. Next, present each picture in detail.

Picture One: *At home.* The child is home alone and the doorbell rings:

- there is an unknown young woman outside asking the child to open the door because she has brought him a gift;
- there is a male neighbour outside asking the child to open the door for him so that they could play together;
- outside is the child's grandmother, asking the child to open the door, because she has come for a visit.

Picture Two: *At the kindergarten*

- one child tries to grab the toy from another one, pulling it and hitting the other child who wouldn't give it easily;
- one child tries to hug another child, who doesn't feel like being hugged and is trying to pull away;
- two children holding hands.

Picture Three: *On the playground*

- a police officer walking around the playground;
- a teacher that the child knows;
- a stranger (woman) giving the child an ice-cream;
- a stranger (man) inviting the child to get into the car and go home.

3. Individual work: Hand over to the children the A4-sized sheets, showing the same pictures that you have just presented. Ask the children to colour the situations in red or in green. When they finish working individually, ask them to get back to the larger group and bring their sheets with them.

4. Results: Start colouring the empty circles next to each situation shown on the flip chart: first ask the children to tell you if it is safe or not and then clarify as needed. For example:

Picture One: *At home.* The child is home alone and the doorbell rings:

- there is a stranger (young woman) outside asking the child to open the door because she has brought him a gift – Red. Children shouldn't open door to strangers whatever they promise;
- there is a male neighbour outside asking the child to open the door for him so that they could play together – Red. The child knows their neighbour but is home alone and can't let him in. Only his parents can do it as they come back home;
- outside is the the child's grandmother, asking the child to open the door, because she has come for a visit. – Green. Grandma is family and the child could open the door.





Picture Two: At the kindergarten

- one child tries to grab the toy from another one, pulling it and hitting the other child who wouldn't give it easily – Red. Children shouldn't fight with each other;
- one child tries to hug another child, who doesn't feel like being hugged and is trying to pull away – Red. Children shouldn't do things that others don't want to, because they will feel miserable;
- two children holding hands – Green. The two children want to spend time together and feel happy about it.

Picture Three: On the playground

- a police officer walking around the playground – Green. S/he is a good stranger and children can turn to him/her for help;
- a teacher that the child knows – Green. S/he is a good stranger and children can trust him/her;
- a stranger (woman) giving the child an ice-cream; She is a dangerous stranger, teasing the child with treats. Children should never accept treats from strangers;
- a stranger (man) inviting the child to get into the car and go home – Red. He is a dangerous stranger and the child shouldn't speak to him. Children shouldn't go with strangers because they can harm them.

5. Activity Wrap-up: Praise the children for a task well done! Tell them that as they grow up they learn about the world around them and feel curious about everything. Yet they should be careful and stay safe. When home alone, they shouldn't open the front door to strangers. At the kindergarten they should communicate to the other children without harming them and making them feel unhappy. And when outside, they could ask good strangers, like the policeman, for help, but they shouldn't trust other strangers even when they act kindly and give them treats and gifts.



9. THE DWARF COUNCIL, THE CITY OF BELAVIA

Aim: To introduce the topic of powers, and of opportunities to influence processes. To present the benefits of equal gender participation in the decision making.

Fairy Tale: Snow White

9.1. PART ONE

Duration: 30 minutes

Number of Moderators: one

Materials:

- a presentation showing different governing bodies;
- a voting box;
- a voting card;
- a voting screen.

Arrangements:

Read *Snow White* to the children before the start of activity. Highlight the key moments in the story line and their characteristics, as well as the life lessons of the fairy tale.

Instructions: Tell the children that in this module they will get introduced to making decisions and to the people who make them. Start presenting by giving them examples close to their way of thinking: elicit who makes decisions at the kindergarten. Tell them that the headmaster decides at what times children should eat, sleep and play.

Move on to the city government. Show them pictures from the city council and explain that these are important people who make decisions important to practically everyone in the city. Show them the municipality building and the hall where the city council meetings take place. Explain that councilors meet once a month and vote about new pavements and road construction works, building new kindergartens or playgrounds. When they make a decision everyone should respect what they have decided. They have different opinions and this is why their decisions are made by voting. Once they vote, there is a vote count and the winner is the proposal that has received the most votes.

Explain how councilors get elected. Tell them that during elections all people in the city decide who will become councilors by voting. Show them a voting screen and a ballot box. Explain that voting is done in private and that everyone can give their opinion without the others finding out about their vote. Show them a voting card tell them that next time they will play the role of councilors and make important decisions using this card. Show them how to vote and the children who are eager to do it can slip the card into the ballot box.





9.2. PART TWO

Duration: 35 minutes

Number of Moderators: one

Materials:

- a dwarf hat for each child;
- a voting card for each child who should vote;
- a poster with a hand-drawn football field on it;
- a poster with a hand-drawn dance hall on it;
- two ballot boxes: one of them with a picture of a football field on it, the other one – with a picture of a dance hall on it;
- a voting screen;
- a poster with a hand-drawn table (two rows/three columns) featuring the two suggestions: a football field and a dance hall. There are three male figures hand-drawn /glued in column one, three female figures hand-drawn/ glued in column two, 2 female and 2 male figures hand-drawn /glued in column three.

| | 3 male figures | 3 female figures | 2 male and 2 female figures |
|------------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| A football pitch | | | |
| A ballroom | | | |

Set up a voting corner in the room and place the two ballot boxes behind a voting screen. There is a football pitch hand-drawn on top of one of the boxes and a dance hall – on top of the other. Place the poster showing the table on the wall.

Instructions:

1. Remind the children the fairy tale about *Snow White* and the activity that helped them learn who makes the important decision for a city and how. Explain that there used to be kingdoms back in the old times. Their rules had their power and authority by birth, they were the most important persons in their kingdoms and could give orders to others, telling them what to do. These rulers were mostly men: kings, tsars and princes. Add that nowadays important decisions are made by voting and remind them about the work of city councilors. Tell the children that today their activities will be about making decisions.

2. The Dwarf Council Game. Tell the children that they will become the dwarf councilors in the magical city of Belavia and have to decide about an important issue. There is a large open space in the city of Belavia, earmarked to meet the needs of dwarf children. A decision has to be taken whether to build a football field or a dance hall on it. Explain that if they want to build a football field, they have to put their card in the box with the picture of a football field on top of it, and if they want to build a dance hall, they have to put their card in the box with the picture of a dance hall on it. Show them how to vote





and remind them that everyone can give their opinion in private, behind the voting screen. Divide the group into girls and boys.

Invite the dwarf boys to vote first. Give each one a voting card and ask them to go one by one behind the voting screen, and vote. Once they are finished, open the two boxes, count the cards, record the result in column one and announce it. Invite the dwarf girls next, give them voting cards and instructions how to vote. Once their voting is over, count the cards, record the result in column two and announces it. Invite them all back in the large group, and invite the girls and boys to vote again, this time recording the results in column three³.

3. Activity Wrap-up: Sum up the results. If there aren't any signs of voting based on gender stereotypes (that is both proposals received votes in both the girls' and the boys' groups), remind the children about the first module where they found out how similar might their interests and activities be. If there are signs of voting based on gender stereotypes (that is boys voting for a football pitch, girls voting for a dance hall), point out that boys and girls share common interests, but may have differences too, as can be seen from their votes. Turn their attention to the fact that whenever important decisions affecting a large number of people are to be made, all interests matter. This is why it is important to have an equal number of girls and boys (women and men). In this way the decisions they make will be in the best interest of all, children and adults, girls and boys, women and men, and no interests will be harmed. The large open space will be divided in two to host both a football pitch and a dance hall. This decision will make all children dwarfs in Belavia happy. Tell the children to keep the voting cards in case some important issues come out and their opinion is asked: then they can schedule another meeting of the dwarf council and put it to a vote.

³The number of boys and girls should be equal during voting, if possible.



10. WHO IS THE TRUE PRINCESS?

Aim: To introduce a positive female role model, balancing service to others and aspirations for self-improvement and personal development.

Fairy Tale: The Beauty and the Beast

Duration: 40 minutes.

Number of Moderators: one/preferably two.

Materials:

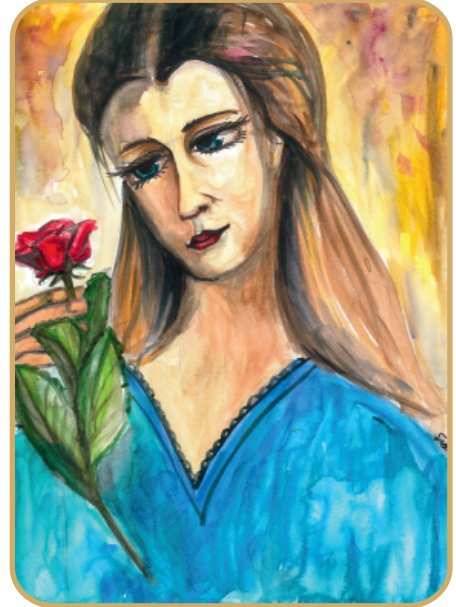
- 1 doll for the Beast as the Prince;
- 2 dolls for the Beauty as the Princess.

Arrangements:

Read *The Beauty and the Beast* to the children before the start of activity. Highlight the key moments in the story line and their characteristics, as well as the life lessons of the fairy tale.

Instructions:

1. Tell the children that the Beauty from the fairy tale is quite beautiful, kind-hearted and smart. She loves reading books. When her father lost his fortune and they moved to live to a country house she used to finish her housework and go back to reading books. When she lived in the Castle of the Beast the large library full of books was what impressed her the most. Add that at the end of the fairy tale when the Beast turned into a Prince (show them the doll) a bunch of Princesses appeared who wanted to get married to him. Set the group to a task and ask them to help the Prince spot the true Princess. She is beautiful, smart, brave, know a lot and can cope up with difficult situations. The false one lies that she is a Princess. She is beautiful, but she is also lazy and doesn't want to read books, can't manage on her own and keep waiting for somebody else to help her do what she has to.
2. Take the roles of the two Princesses and get a doll for each one. (Role play both, using the dolls one after the other if you work on your own.) Set up the stage and a place for the audience to sit. Get on stage and make sure that the children are seated on their chairs in front of you.
3. Describe 4 activities for each Princess, each time starting off with the line *I am the true Princess*. There are four statements for each Princess, each set challenging or respectively asserting gender stereotypes.





Statements for the true Princess

1. I am the true Princess. I am beautiful, but in addition to taking good care of myself, I also take care of my family and help other people.
2. I am the true Princess. I like walking around the rose garden, but what I like most is reading books in the library.
3. I am the true Princess. I go to school, my dream is to become a kindergarten teacher and teach children like you.
4. I am the true Princess. If the wheel of my carriage breaks, I can read the instructions on how to repair it. I will try to fix it myself.

Statements for the false Princess

1. I am the true Princess. I am beautiful and that's what I do: there's no need to do anything for the sake of others. All they long I am busy having my hair and my make-up done.
2. I am the true Princess. All they long I keep walking in the rose garden. I don't like books and I won't set my foot in the library, ever. It's not a decent place for Princesses to be.
3. I am the true Princess. There's no need for me to go to school. I am a princess: nothing else left to dream about.
4. I am the true Princess. If the wheel of my carriage breaks, I don't know how to fix it, and I don't want to get dirty. I will wait for the Prince to come and help me.

Present the first two statements for each Princess and invite the children to stand by the side of the true Princess. Ask them to explain why the Beast-Prince should choose this Princess: use the doll for the Prince and instruct the children to take turns as they pass it on. Only the child holding the doll can give their reasons. Explain who is the true Princess and give your reasons. Ask the children to go back to their places. Continue with the next two statements, following the same instructions. At the end of this activity invite the children to congratulate each other for a task well-done and for helping the Beast-Prince find the most beautiful, smart and kind-hearted Princess.

4. Activity Wrap-up: Invite the children to list the positive characteristics of the true Princess. Turn their attention to the fact that she is beautiful, smart, a book-lover and never fears facing up difficulties.



“...AND THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER” OR „DREAM ON...READ ON...” THE CLOSING MODULE

Aim: To finalize the work of the children in the different modules. To sum up the topics that they have worked on.

Duration: 45 minutes.

Number of Moderators: one.

Materials:

- a floor jigsaw of 12 pieces, equaling the number of modules; each piece shows a picture linked to the activities that the children engaged in during each module;
- a hat and a cloak for the moderator;
- a letter by the Fairy Tale, written in advance;
- an A5-sized four-page booklet for each child. Page One features a picture of children with a book, with personalized inscription (This is the book of {the child's name}). Pages Two and Three contain the letter by the Fairy Tale, with personalized salutation for each child, and page four offers a collage of the fairy tales' characters;
- a stamp reading *And there will be no ending...*, to be placed on the last page of the booklets provided in the Introductory Module, featuring now 12 stickers, one for each activity;
- snacks and desserts for the children.

Arrangements: Set up three working areas. In the first one put together the floor jigsaw, following the shape of a hopscotch. In the second one arranges stools for everyone to sit on. In the last one put a table, with the booklets on it, individually prepared as a gift to each child.

Instructions:

1. Modules Wrap-up: Divide the children in 12 groups, one for each module. Ask the children to start playing hopscotch: group one rolls a dice onto Module One. Invite the children from the group to stand by the picture and help them go over the contents and the key message of this Module. Repeat until all modules are covered.



Dear children,

It has been a pleasure to spend time together during this magical journey.

Let me congratulate you for your rigorous efforts, for your amazing drive and the fun you had, and for your loving devotion to fairy tales. You were brave, curious, smart and kind-hearted. You showed respect for each other and worked together as a team. I can see you today, grown-up and wiser.

Since the time we first met, we have travelled a long way through wonderful kingdoms, rescuing noble heroes, fighting terrible villains.

The brave girl Gerda and the little boy Kai taught us about the value of true friendship and the fun things girls and boys can do together. We saved Cinderella and the Prince because we spotted danger and violence. Together with the the smartest and the youngest goat we came across strangers, some of them good, others bad, and we have learnt to protect ourselves.

We helped Cinderella to find out who is the true Prince, truly strong, brave and noble. With our help, the Beast Prince also found out who the true Beauty is: a book-lover, coping up with the most trying situations. We were important advisers and we voted so that the dwarf children in Belavia could have a new football field for the boys and a dance hall for the girls.

We assigned tasks to the Little Red Riding Hood's mother and father, so that they could share the housework and then spend extra time for themselves. We woke up Sleeping Beauty to let her choose a profession that she likes. At the Chocolate Factory, owned by Puss in Boots, girls and boys received an equal number of paper clovers for completing the same task. Rapunzel's story taught us about children's rights and responsibilities. Just look back and see how much we learned from the magic stories...

I have been part of every child's life, and I will be. Let your love for fairy tales stay with you when you grow up. I believe that wherever you go, you will bring its magic and kindness with you.

Let the power of my magic words help you keep your childlike curiosity and your drive to make this world a more beautiful place. Remember that as long as you believe in the magic of fairy tales, you will keep growing up brave and confident.

Dear children, it's you, you deserve to become my special ambassadors among young and old. Encourage other children and adults to respect and treat each other well, because all people are equally valuable and powerful, girls and boys, women and men alike.

Together we can make the world a better and fairer place.



3. Award ceremony: Tell the children that each of them will get their personal letter by the Fairy Tale and start the ceremony for completing the adventures. Stand behind the table with the booklets and the stamp on it. Call each child by their name, following a list prepared in advance. Hand a booklet to each child, with the Fairy Tale's letter inside and stamp his/her booklet with the 12 stickers glued to it, one for each activity.

4. Closing: Tell the children that they have successfully completed all adventures. Praise them for their participation and urge them to keep up the good work, and read on.



Adventure Accomplished



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