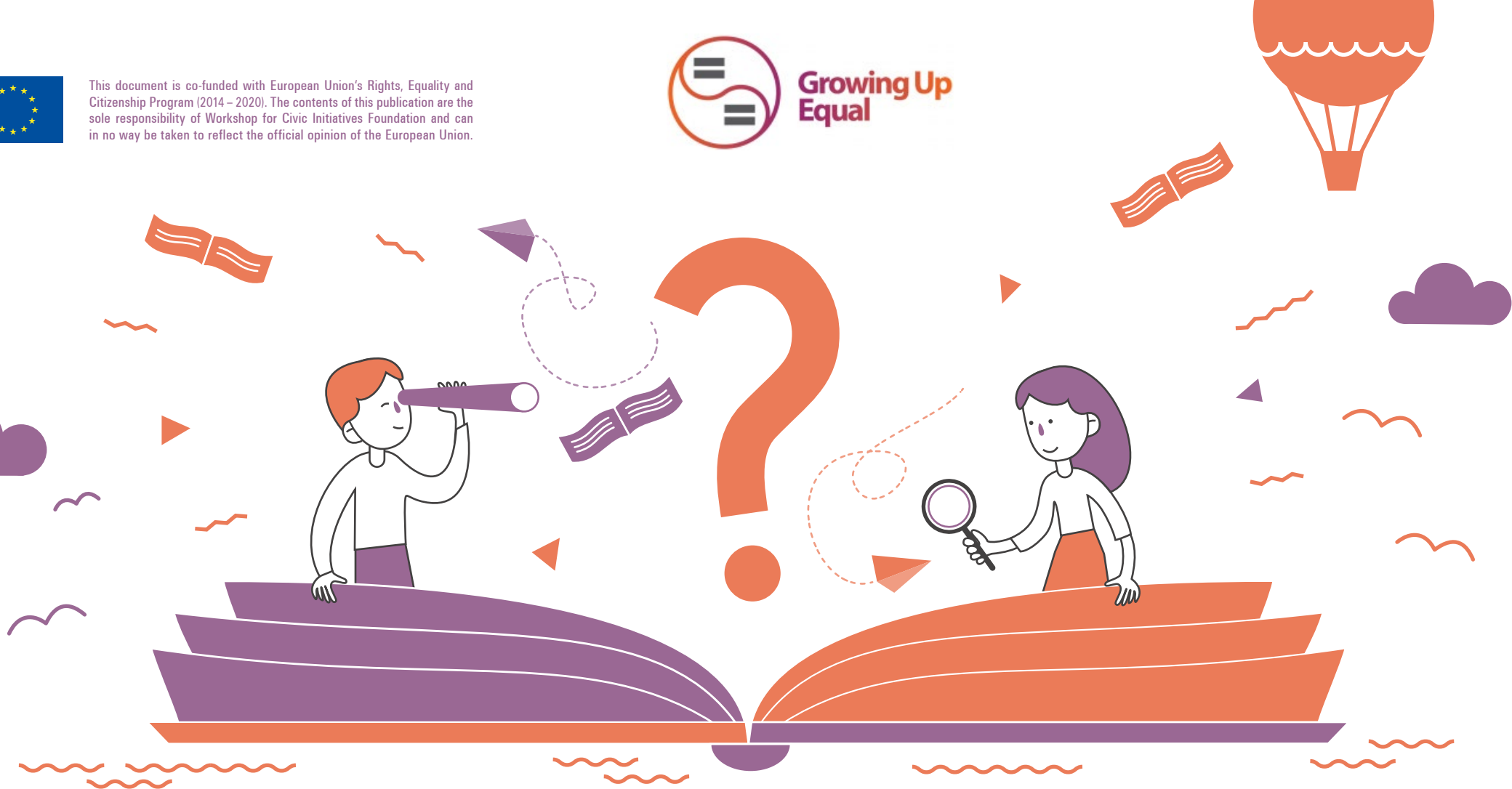




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**Growing Up
Equal**



AUDIT OF SCHOOL GENDER POLICIES AND PRACTICES

(FOR PRIMARY/BASIC EDUCATION)



Audit of school gender policies and practices

(for primary/basic education)

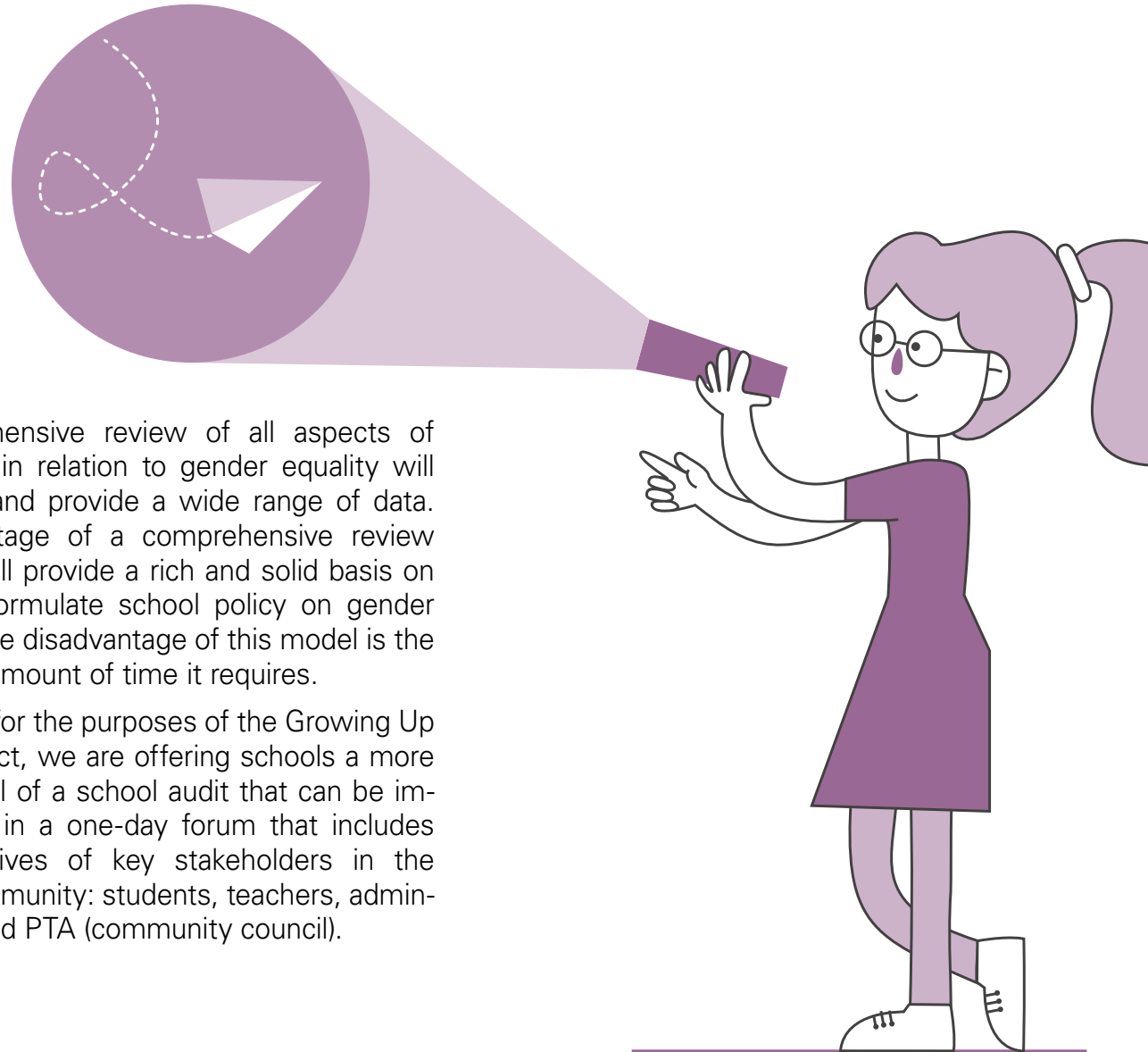
A survey of primary school teachers, conducted within the framework of the Growing Up Equal project with the help of 4 focus groups in 4 different towns in Bulgaria (over 40 teachers in total), showed that teachers did not find elements of unequal treatment of girls and boys at school. The influence of gender stereotypes is most often explained by teachers by factors external to the school community, such as values shared in families or other factors of the environment in which students grow up. Although the influence of a number of factors external to the school community is undeniable in shaping students' understandings of gender roles, the school, with its rules of order, curriculum, teaching aids, schoolyard and sports facilities, and extracurricular activities,

undoubtedly plays an important role in shaping students' worldviews.

This audit will enable the school leadership and the whole school community to explore the culture of their school and how it contributes to building understandings of gender equality. The audit includes tools to look at the following aspects: the school's human resources policy for staff recruitment; the school policy and whether it includes specific clauses to support equality between men and women; the formal curriculum and the textbooks used; the extra-curricular activities program; the schoolyard; working with external partners - the PTA and other adults who come into direct contact with pupils.

We encourage all members of the school community to become involved in researching current practices in order for the audit to be effective. This will create an opportunity for consensus decisions in formulating the findings of the review and also in making recommendations for changes and improvements in practice to achieve equity for girls and boys/women and men in school.





Establishing a working group that includes representatives of all stakeholders: students, teachers, school leadership, parents and community council will create legitimacy for the audit.

The proposed audit uses a „research in action“ approach. This approach was chosen for two reasons. On the one hand, it allows learning from experience, and on the other, it promotes change in the school community motivated by the participants themselves. It can be said that audit participants will explore their own experiences and gain new knowledge that is owned by all participants in the process and can be used directly to drive the change they wish to achieve.

A comprehensive review of all aspects of school life in relation to gender equality will take time and provide a wide range of data. The advantage of a comprehensive review is that it will provide a rich and solid basis on which to formulate school policy on gender equality. The disadvantage of this model is the excessive amount of time it requires.

Therefore, for the purposes of the Growing Up Equal project, we are offering schools a more rapid model of a school audit that can be implemented in a one-day forum that includes representatives of key stakeholders in the school community: students, teachers, administration, and PTA (community council).

Audit of school policies and practices in a one-day school forum

In this approach, the audit is carried out 'on the spot' in a one-day event, with time on the agenda to discuss the development of a gender equality policy based on the recommendations made by participants.

The school gender audit forum should be structured in advance. We recommend that the structure of the forum be developed with the help of a facilitator external to the school community who has experience in organizing and facilitating public forums.

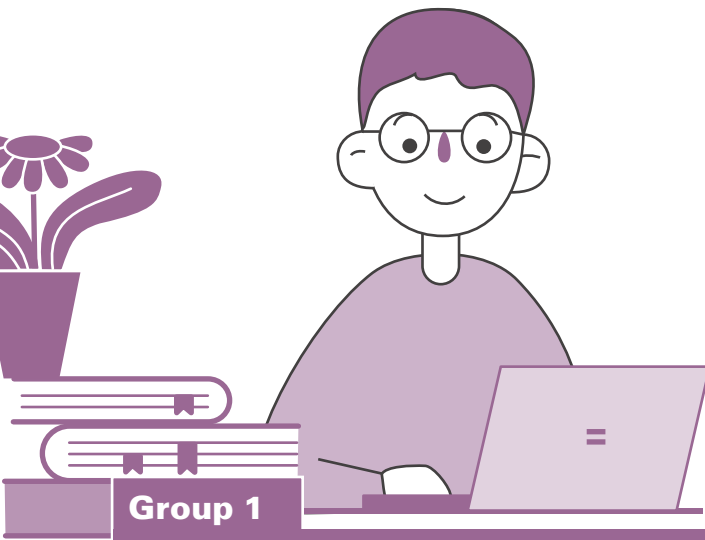
The structure of the forum will include various working groups that will be formed in advance and briefed on how to prepare for the forum by carrying out a rapid review of a particular aspect of school's practice.

An indicative distribution of the working groups and the topics of discussion is proposed below. The idea is each group to present its perspective on a few key topics:

- School policies, including those on human resources, rules of order, policies on preventing and combating bullying and violence, etc.
- The curriculum and the interaction between teachers and students;
- Equal access to extracurricular activities;
- The school environment, including the schoolyard.

Each working group will extract and identify areas that require improvement to achieve equity for girls and boys, women and men within the school. On this basis, each group will formulate recommendations that will then form the basis for consensus building in the larger group (the Forum) on areas of intervention.

Thus, in one day, the school community will carry out a rapid review of the main areas of activity relevant to gender equality in schools and identify an action plan to improve the conditions for achieving such equality.



SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Tasks for the group —
sample discussion questions:

Policies

- Does the HR policy have specific gender equality clauses for the selection of job candidates?
- Does the school have a balance of men and women in the teaching staff and administration? What is the percentage of women and in what roles are they involved?
- Is there a policy to encourage the recruitment of more men as primary teachers?
- What procedures are in place to ensure that the principle of equality between men and women is respected in the school? Do all members of staff have equal access to all types of leave (including maternity/paternity), secondments, sabbatical leave, time off to care for a sick child, and other types of paid or unpaid leave?
- Does the school's by-law have specific provisions for the equal treatment of girls and boys in terms of their appearance (dress, hairstyles), behavior (attendance and behavior in class, behavior in between classes in the school building and schoolyard), and other aspects of work?
- Does the school have a separate policy to promote equality between men and women? And does it have a separate policy to prevent and combat bullying, including sexual harassment? Does it have a policy for dealing with pupils with special needs?

- Have there been any recorded cases of harassment in the last year? Who suffers more often from bullying - boys or girls? And have there been any recorded cases of sexual harassment, including verbal harassment? Who suffers more often from sexual harassment?
- Staff development: does the school management consider that the topic of gender equality should be part of mandatory staff development courses? If yes, what percentage of the teaching staff and administration have attended such courses?

Curricular and extracurricular activities

- Is there a perception among management, teachers or parents that teaching certain grades (e.g. primary grades 1 to 4) is more appropriate for single-sex teachers?
- What is the profile of regularly absent students, including by gender? Does this profile change from primary to secondary and upper secondary grades?
- In allocating the budget for extracurricular activities, are those activities that do not fit into the traditional domain of girls or boys equally valued? For example, do boys have the opportunity to do art, knitting or dance? Do girls have the opportunity to engage in football, martial arts and adventure sports?

References

- How do you think the school can further facilitate staff skills development in the area of gender equality?
- What measures can the school take to improve attendance and prevent dropout? Are specific measures needed for girls and boys?
- What measures can schools take to prevent sexual harassment, including verbal harassment of girls?



Group 2

PRIMARY TEACHERS

Tasks for the group - sample discussion questions:

Curriculum

- Are there enough images in primary school textbooks of women leaders who are represented outside the family – as women who are successful in their professions, leaders of social movements, etc.?
- Are there enough images of women in non-traditional occupations in math word problems, for example: a woman who owns a construction company built 20 buildings, of which she sold 16; how many buildings were left unsold?

Learning environment

- Is there equal access to equipment for boys and girls?
- Do teachers encourage girls to play with Legos and other construction toys and boys to engage in caregiving games (taking on the roles of fathers caring for children and the household, for example)?
- Have there been any incidents of sexist comments regarding girls and boys by a primary teacher, such as “don’t cry like a girl” (regarding a boy), and “football is for boys” regarding a girl?
- Are there different expectations in gaming depending on gender? What games do boys play most often in the big break? What games do girls play?

Extracurricular activities

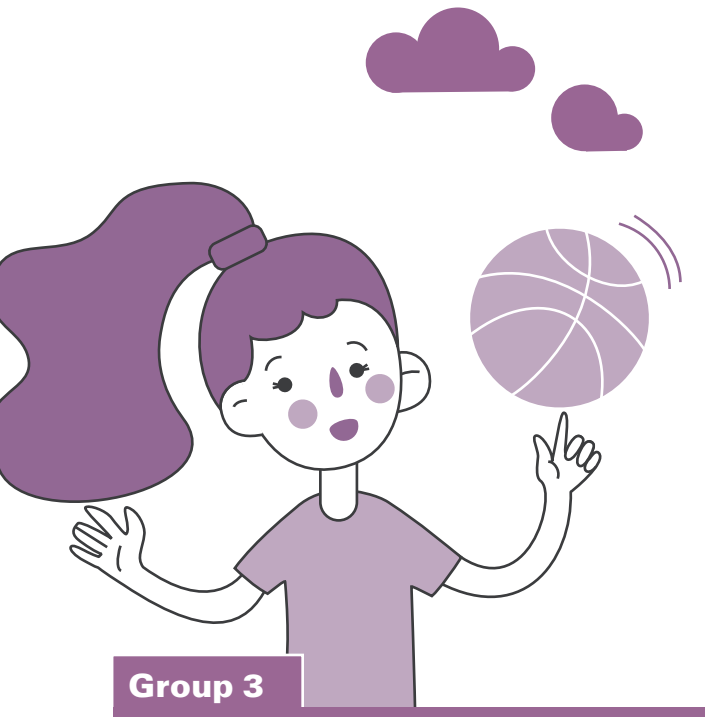
- Is there a sufficient range of extra-curricular activities for both boys and girls?
- Is girls' participation in certain extracurricular activities (e.g., soccer club, martial arts) limited? Is boys' participation limited in other activities such as ballet, dance?
- What can be done to overcome any imbalance?

Policies

- Are you familiar with the school's anti-bullying and prevention policy?
- Have there been cases of children who do not fit gender norms being bullied by their classmates?
- Have there been cases of child-on-child sexual abuse, including verbal abuse. Which children are more often victims of such – boys or girls?

References

- What steps can teachers take to support children to follow their dreams and aspirations, regardless of gender?
- How do you think primary teachers can further promote the equal treatment of girls and boys, including those children who do not fit traditional gender norms?



Group 3

PRIMARY STUDENTS

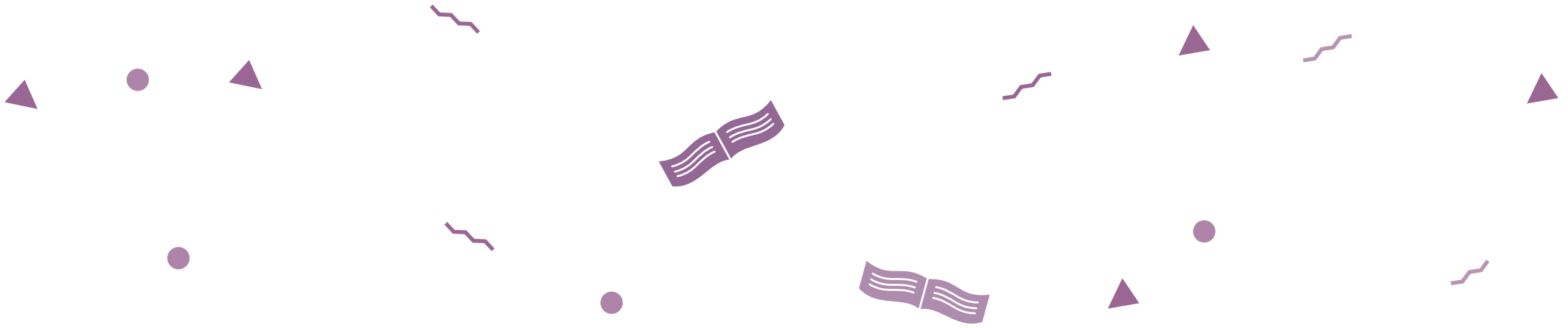
Group tasks – with the help of an external facilitator, the group should answer the following questions:

Learning process and behavior

- Do your teachers have the same attitude towards the success of boys and girls? How do teachers express praise to a boy? And how do they praise a girl?
- What are boys most often praised for?
- What are girls most often praised for?
- Are teachers' attitudes toward boys' and girls' disciplinary infractions the same?
- How do teachers reprimand a boy?
- How do teachers reprimand a girl?
- Have you ever heard a teacher say that girls are better at some activities (reading, writing, dancing, etc.) and boys are better at others (soccer, basketball, computers)?
- Have you ever heard a teacher or a member of the school leadership say that certain types of clothing are not appropriate for girls or for boys?

Extracurricular activities and schoolyard

- How many extracurricular activities for girls does the school offer? List all possible.
- How many extracurricular activities for boys does the school offer? List all possible.
- What do you do in the schoolyard? Who do you play with?
- What do you like about playtime?
- What don't you like about playtime?
- What upsets you during a game?
- What causes problems during a game?
- What will you do if it comes to a fight?
- List the changes you would make related to: how the schoolyard is organized; the activities organized in the schoolyard



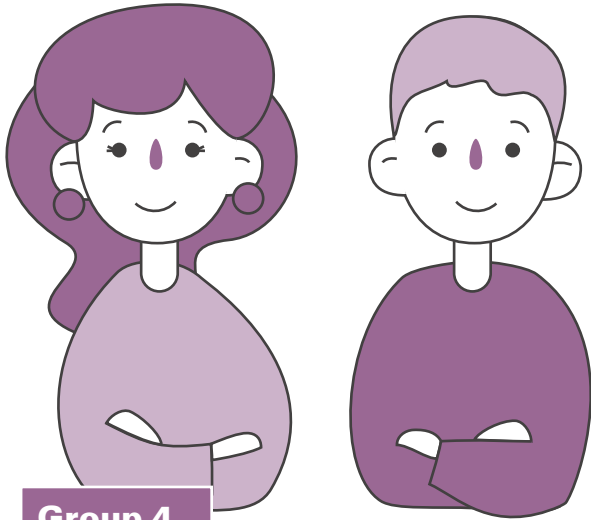
Curriculum

- Who are your favorite literary characters? How many of them are women? Name them.
- How many books have you read and/or studied that have a woman or girl as the main character? List them.
- And how many books have you read and/or studied that have a man or boy as the main character? List them.

References

- What do you think the school can do to make girls feel more relaxed and confident?
- What do you think the school can do to make boys feel more relaxed and confident?





Group 4

PARENT ASSOCIATION OR COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Group tasks –
to answer the following questions:

Policies

- Is the PTA membership representative of both genders?
- What can be done to encourage participation?
- Does the school have procedures relating to the involvement of both parents (where possible) in the life of the school community, e.g. parents' meetings, extra-curricular activities, etc.?
- What happens when parents are separated or divorced?
- Is student progress data communicated to both parents when appropriate?
- Are parents of both genders encouraged to participate in school-related events and supervisory functions?

- Is there a dedicated member of staff or anti-bullying committee to whom reports can be referred?
- Who investigates reports of sexual harassment, including verbal harassment?

Rules of Procedure

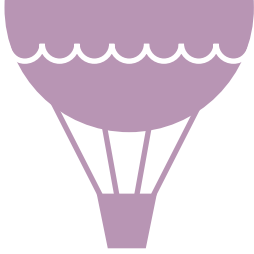
- Is priority given to children with 'tantrum' behavior, for example, children who disrupt order or seek attention in class?
- How are children who demonstrate their need for extra support approached – in a quiet or withdrawn way (introvert behavior)?
- What types of behavior are rewarded? Are there differences between boys and girls?
- What types of behavior are subject to sanctions? Are there differences between boys and girls?

- Is there a fair jewelry policy?
- Is there a fair policy regarding hairstyles?
- Is there a fair dress code policy (adequate to the needs of boys and girls)?
- Who do you think gets more sanctions? The boys or the girls?
- Which parents are most often called into school to discuss misbehavior with the management? Parents of girls or parents of boys?

- Do you think the conduct and sanctions policy is fair? If not, what changes could be made to it?
- Do you think there is enough support for students with special needs?
- And is there enough support for students with exceptional ability/talent?
- Is there a member of staff in the school you could approach for advice on equality issues between girls and boys?

References

- What support can the school provide to a student who feels oppressed and stressed because of expectations placed on them related to their gender?
- What additional elements in the school environment, facilities or schoolyard would support equality for girls and boys? After the pre-preparation phase and soliciting participants to fill out the groups, the school community chooses the date for the school forum. The groups come together to meet throughout the day.



The agenda of the school forum could look like this:

1. Presentation of the purpose of the Forum and its structure (working groups).
2. Discussion of the identified questions in each group and formulation of group answers. This discussion should be facilitated and structured with the help of a facilitator. It is expected to take a minimum of 1.5 hours.
3. Presenting the results of the group discussions - drawing out the main areas where changes need to be made. Each group nominates their own presenter. Presentations are expected to take 15 minutes per group, 60 minutes total.
4. Second discussion in the working groups: formulation of recommendations for changes in school policies and practices regarding the promotion of gender equality. This discussion will again be structured with the help of an external facilitator and is expected to take a minimum of 1 hour.
5. Presentation of the recommendations formulated by each working group. Presentations for 10 minutes per group – 40 minutes total.
6. Large group discussion and assignment of tasks, timelines, responsibilities in relation to improving school policies and practices on gender equality – expected duration – 60 min.
7. Conclusion and closing.



Expected results of the school equality audit

The school audit on gender and gender equality will produce as a result:

- The different stakeholders shall reach an agreement of on the areas that need improvement in order to achieve gender equality and equity as an ultimate goal.
- The responsibilities of all stakeholders (students, teachers, administration and parents) will be defined and an action plan will be made.
- Change will be managed in a participatory manner.

- Following the audit, we recommend that the school community use the model school policy on gender equality and formulate and implement such a policy. The model can be found in the Resources section of the Growing Equal website.
- Audits of school policies and practices to promote gender equality can be carried out on a regular basis – every 1–2 years. The forum methodology used allows for broad participation and is useful in both agreeing the introduction of new policies and practices and reporting on progress in implementation.

