



# PLAY IT FOR CHANGE

Policy Brief



# Executive summary

***Play it for Change* is a European project aimed at raising awareness and empowering girls and boys for the prevention of gender-based violence through music and audiovisual media. Following two years of implementation in schools in six different countries (Catalonia (Spain), Croatia, Slovenia, Poland, Greece and Cyprus) we have identify some fundamental principles for the empowerment and involvement of adolescent girls and boys in taking action for gender equality, as well as the challenges and needs of teachers for the prevention of gender-based violence.**

## **The project**

Play it For Change | Raising awareness and empowerment of girls and boys for the prevention of gender based violence through audio-visual media and music. Grant Agreement no: REC-VAW-AG-2016-02-776965.

## **Coordinator**

Fundació Surt, Catalonia (Spain)

## **Consortium**

KMOP – Greece

The Peace Institute – Slovenia

Feminoteka – Poland

CESI – Croatia

Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS) – Cyprus

# Introduction

Eradicating gender-based violence is one of the greatest challenges facing 21st century societies. In order to understand and combat this phenomenon both in the present and in the future, it is essential to analyse its impact and how stereotypes and patriarchal roles that sustain this violation of fundamental rights are maintained in the younger generations.

For young people nowadays, music and audiovisual media are of fundamental importance. Paying attention to music allows us to explore how models of masculinity and femininity as well as social norms in relation to sexuality and romantic relationships evolve and are transformed.

It is not just the lyrics of the songs that matter. The message conveyed through images in music videos and how women and men are represented also plays a very significant role. Moreover, artists are a great influence for girls and boys in transition to adult life, be it in terms of their expectations, tastes, self-expression, dress, or relating to others.

Despite the undeniable global advances of the feminist movement in recent decades, a lot of music still reproduces inequalities and forms of discrimination against women, such as the myth of romantic love or pressure to conform to beauty standards.

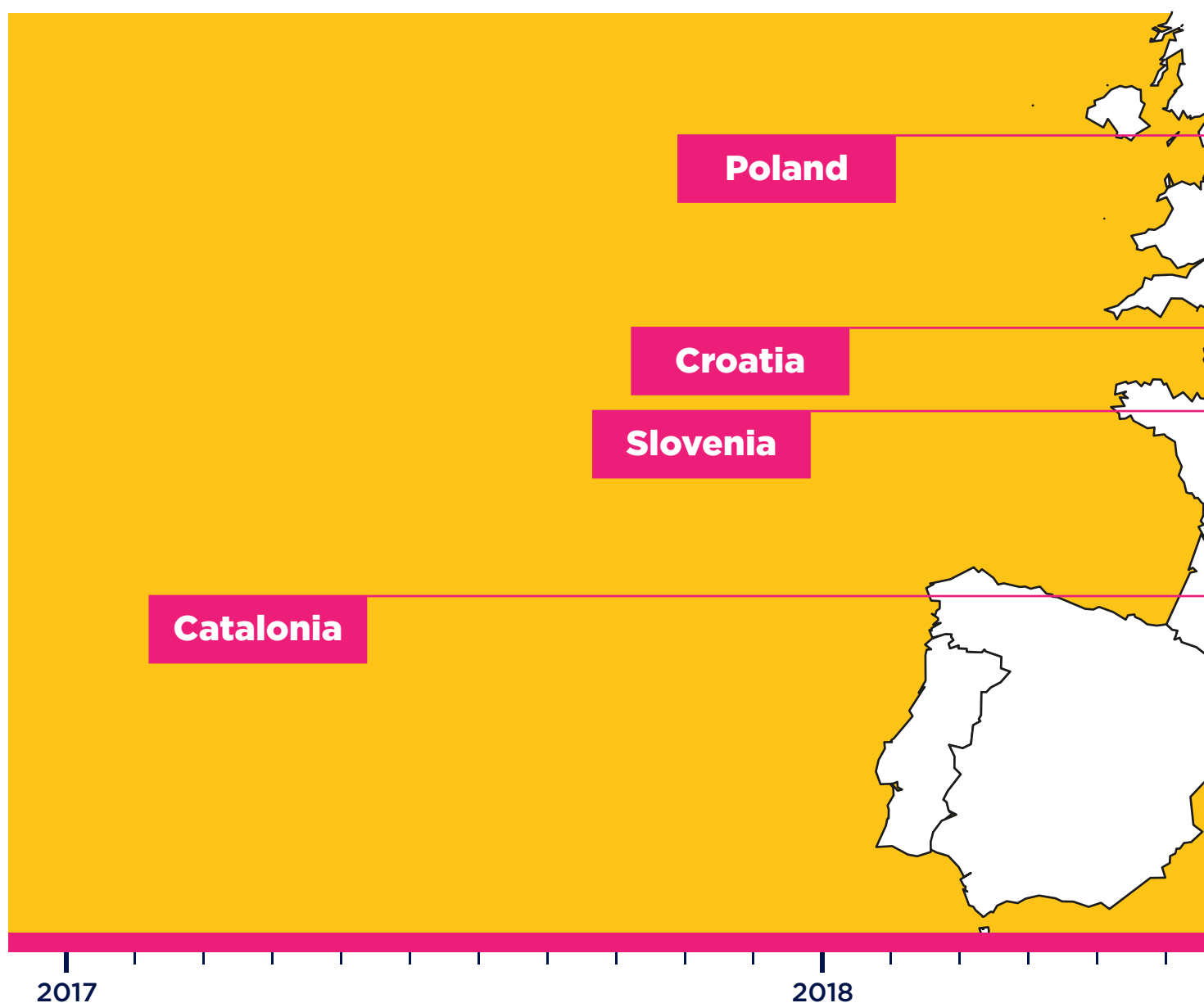
It is important to identify the specific ways in which sexism and gender-based violence are currently in force, but prevention strategies must be under the trends and characteristics of today's society. Considering the audiovisual and music culture in which adolescents are involved, innovative methodologies of prevention through music and audiovisual media emerge as a powerful possibility.

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# Approach and results

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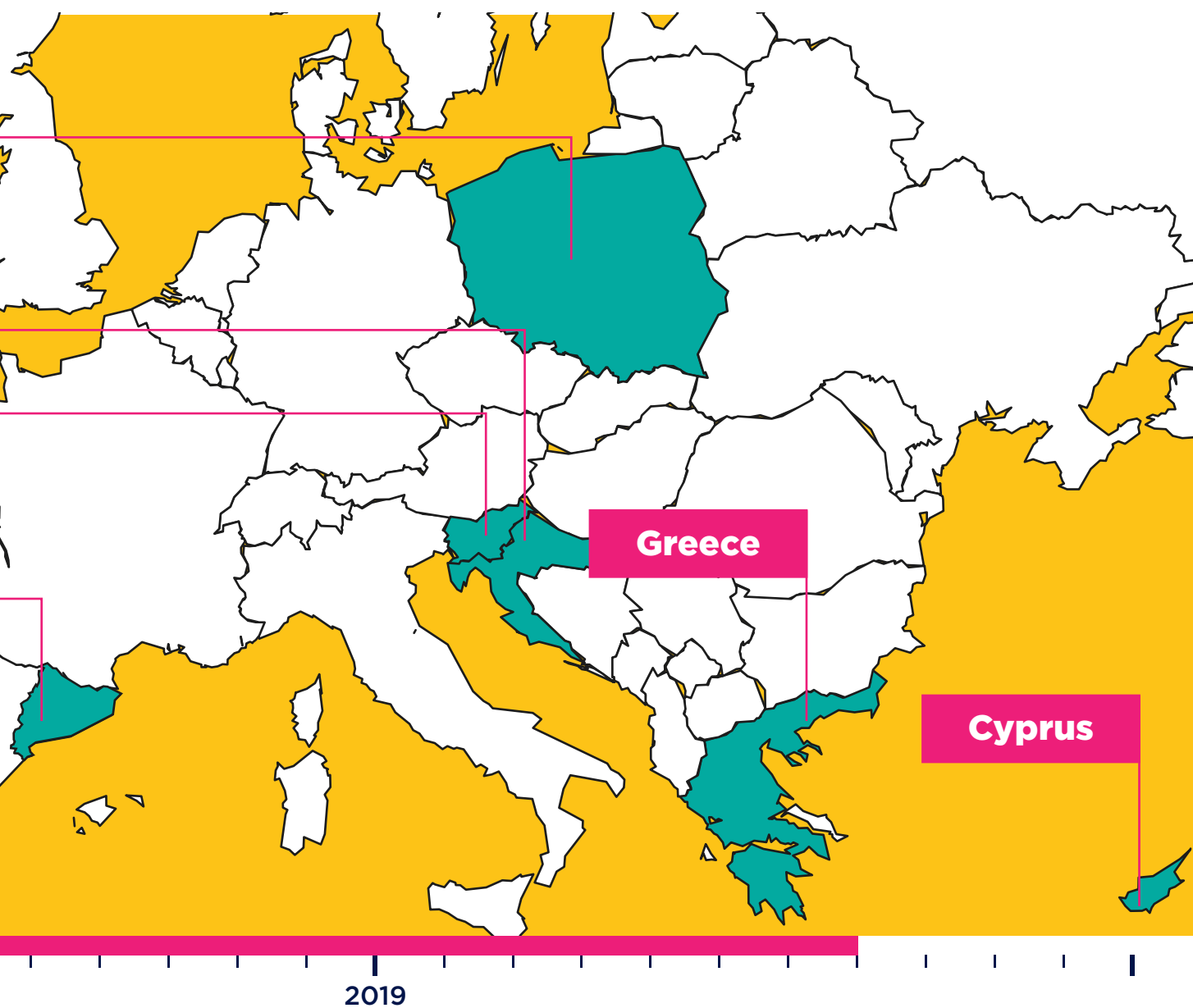
**“Play it for Change”** project, funded by the European Union within the framework of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme has developed a plan for the prevention of gender-based violence in adolescence through music and audiovisual media.



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During the two years of implementation of the project, teachers and 12-18-year-old students from the participant countries have looked through the lens of music to reflect and analyse gender stereotypes and roles, including myths of romantic love and gender-based violence.



### ***Empowerment of adolescents***

Listening and watching pieces of music enabled girls and boys to openly talk about these issues. Reflecting on songs and artists they knew and admired generated proximity and interest in the covered topics; while creating songs and music videos, also contributed to enhancing the creativity of adolescent participants.

In addition to strengthening artistic skills, working in groups fostered mutual support and cooperation between classmates which also resulted in increased cohesion and intra-group trust. Overall, a process of individual and collective empowerment on the part of the boys and, especially of the girls was enabled. The project contributed by responding, at least partially, to their need to discuss and address issues related to gender and the relationships that affect them on a day-to-day basis.

### ***Challenges of teachers***

One of the most notable issues that emerged as an obstacle in the promotion of equality and the prevention of gender-based violence was the lack of teacher training and resources in relation to gender, gender-based violence or LGBTI rights. Most teachers in schools had never received specific training on the above-mentioned topics.

In this sense, participant teachers agreed that knowledge and practical tools for tackling gender inequalities and gender-based violence, including prevention, detection, referral and support, should be part of their basic instruction.

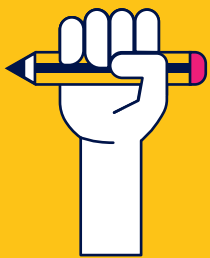
This gap entails a difficulty in the mainstreaming application of the gender perspective and the promotion of egalitarian and healthy relationships in their professional practice because they lack strategies and means.

Furthermore, in some countries the inflexibility of the school curriculum hinders the chances to introduce non-compulsory subjects that teachers consider to be prior, such as sex and relationships education.

In this regard, the insufficient institutional support to develop innovative programmes aimed at eradicating gender-based violence and promoting egalitarian healthy and non-violent relationships in the educational sphere remains a crucial issue.

# Conclusion and practical recommendations

“**Play it for Change**” has identified some particularly relevant elements for the improvement of the prevention of gender-based violence in schools. These aspects are presented below in the form of recommendations:



**Youth centred approach.** Applying a youth-centred practice means putting adolescent’s interests, needs and preferences at the focus and recognizing their diversity. In other words, avoiding an adultist perspective in the approach, the methodology and the contents of the prevention actions. For this, it is essential to involve and empower adolescents and listen to their demands, opinions and concerns.



**Sex and relationships education.** Adolescent girls and boys lack sex and relationships education. They are not provided with positive and diverse role models which makes them more vulnerable to the influence of external and predominant models. The role models from mass media and mainstream music are sometimes nowhere near reflecting feminist values. For this reason, the introduction of compulsory sex and relationships education from a feminist and intersectional perspective is essential for the prevention of gender-based violence, not only among adolescents or youth, but also in the society of the future.



**Gender mainstreaming.** The feminist and intersectional perspective should be present not only when facing issues directly related to gender or violence, but also in all disciplines and areas of work, including the school organisational structure. This is part of the challenge of mainstreaming the gender perspective throughout the education system.



**Research on gender-based violence in adolescence.** It is also a pending task to continue to inquire into the forms of gender-based violence experienced by adolescents. We still have much to explore about the resilience and coping strategies of adolescent girls suffering violence and the services and resources they need to leave abusive relationships and begin recovery processes.

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