Tackling and preventing bulling and cyberbullying

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The Greek Ombudsman 2003-2016:

- over 6,000 cases of children’s rights violations examined
- over 700 meetings and discussions with groups of children
- numerous meetings with teachers / parents
- participation in the National Network against School Violence, etc
Children’s comments and proposals:

- Violence has become “normal” in our lives, as it is already in the whole society.
- Bullying for some children is a way to gain peer respect and recognition.
- Many children victims fear to speak to adults.
- Adults do not usually listen to us and they do not give enough interest and time to understand.
- When teachers punish someone for bullying, they believe that they finish with their duties...
Children’s comments and proposals:

- Mutual respect of rights cannot be taught through theories, but only through experience
- Punishment of perpetrators alone is not effective
- We need help, in order to resolve our conflicts peacefully
- We need to trust teachers and to be trusted by them
- Mostly, we need teachers and parents to listen, understand and support us, instead of panicking, being strict, distant or indifferent
Proposals for effective prevention and handling of bullying and cyberbullying

- Create **friendly school climate and environment**
  promote **democratic school governance**, build **bonds and trust relationships**
- Adopt school regulations, through dialogue among students, teachers and parents. *Children need clear rules!*
- Emphasize careful examination of any violent incident or conflict
- Avoid easy use of punishment
- Provide also for alternative / restorative ways to deal with bullying, apart from punishment.
- Train teachers to listen to children, to build mutual respect bonds, to recognise bullying and to resolve conflicts peacefully.
- Promote teachers’ collaboration, adoption of common principles and practices allocation of responsibilities supported by other teachers
- Organise discussions and projects for awareness on children’s rights, and on protection from every form of violence, discrimination, bullying and cyberbullying.

- Focus on the rights in the social media. Clarify that cyberbullying is an issue under the responsibility of school!
- Organise creative, artistic, communication and sport group activities in school accompanied with discussions and shared responsibilities
- Promote students’ participation in all matters affecting them, including handling violent incidents.
Organise regular classroom dialogue and give responsibilities to students’ councils.
- Adopt school mediation through training of teachers, information of parents, training of groups of students, exchanging with other schools and including mediation in school regulations, practices and culture…
- Involve, advise and support parents, especially when they or their children seem to be very vulnerable or face particular problems (often parents blame school or others because they cannot cope with their own problems / weaknesses)
- Clarify how school can collaborate with community psycho-social and judicial services when their involvement is needed.
- Involve the police and juvenile justice only as a last resort, if serious crimes are committed and school cannot deal with cases effectively.