

# LEAP



## PARTICIPATORY METHODS FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AFFECTED BY SEXUAL VIOLENCE

### PUBLICATION ON THE IMPACT AND RESULTS OF LEAP

NOVEMBER 2015 - NOVEMBER 2017

International Centre, University of Bedfordshire  
in collaboration with:  
Barnardo's SECOS (England)  
Stichting Alexander (The Netherlands)  
Terre des hommes (Romania and Hungary)  
Pulse Foundation (Bulgaria)

Life skills, leadership, limitless potential:  
Supporting children and young people  
affected by sexual violence in Europe by  
strengthening and facilitating participatory  
practice, LEAP Funded by the European  
Commission.

# LEAP AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE



Children and young people all over the world have experienced sexual violence during their lives. Trafficking, rape, sexting, and early marriages are a few examples. It happens everywhere, in all communities.

We talk about how participation can prevent sexual violence from happening and strengthen young people affected by sexual violence. However, doing participatory work to tackle sexual abuse remains a challenge to us all. Many wonder: how can we do participatory work without re-traumatising young people?

Together with our national partners PULSE Foundation (Bulgaria), Stichting Alexander (Alexander Foundation, The Netherlands), SECOS Barnardo's (UK), and Terre des hommes (Romania and Hungary) we decided that we wanted to provide training and resources to support specialist services that



**“We can never share ALL we have learned. But we hope you will want to experience participatory work yourself.”**

**KATE D’ARCY** LEAP PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

undertake participation with young people affected by sexual violence. The EU funded our 2 year project (2015 – 2017).

Over the first year of the project each country partner delivered a 4-day training programme intended to connect various professionals and young people. The programme offered a range of training tools, materials and opportunities to different support services including teachers, youth workers, doctors, social workers and psychologists. To date, across the UK, The Netherlands, Bulgaria and Romania, around 100 professionals in specialist services have been trained to confidently use participatory approaches to support young people affected by sexual violence. The aim is to empower young people to find solutions in their own lives.

Each partner has had its own approach to LEAP due to different policy and practice contexts in their country. The different

perspectives have contributed to the development of the LEAP project. During the process we’ve learned so much from each other. We have started to share our project with wider groups of practitioners in each country and hope to continue this through our celebration events – one in each country- and the sharing of resources; we will share LEAP tools with a wider network of practitioners who will become aware of the importance of participation and become confident to undertake participation work with children and young people affected by sexual violence.

“We can never share all we have learned. We hope you will want to experience participatory work yourself.” You can check [Childhub](#) and read and share this magazine on social media. Let’s all participate!

**KATE D’ARCY**

The International Centre,  
The University of Bedfordshire  
LEAP project co-ordinator





**EDITORIAL, KATE D'ARCY:**

"We can tackle the issues around sexual violence by engaging with children and young people!"

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**LEAP IS...**

Over 500 people are strengthened by participatory methods against violence.

LEAP



**WE ALL PARTICIPATE**

"I've experienced sexual violence. Before LEAP I wasn't able to talk about it. Please, talk about it!"

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**LEAP PRACTITIONERS**

"The LEAP approach protected my clients! They felt at ease and safe to share their stories."



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"According to our youth group, merchandise is the key to raise awareness."

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**AROUND THE WORLD**

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**DO'S & DON'TS**

"Participation is not one size fits all."

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# LEAP IS.

THE AIM OF THE LEAP PROJECT IS TO PROMOTE PARTICIPATORY PRACTICE WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AFFECTED BY SEXUAL VIOLENCE.

LEAP seeks to improve knowledge and develop skills and understanding of children's rights, focussing on safe and ethical participatory practice. Furthermore, LEAP aims to develop confidence amongst practitioners and strengthen commitments to participatory practice when supporting children and young people who are affected by sexual violence.

#### **LEAP the way**

With the aim to strengthen participation against sexual violence each partner conducted the following LEAP activities: 4-day Communities of Practice training programme, 3-day youth facilitator

training, 12-session programme, a webinar and a range of projects designed by children and young people. LEAP activities in each country were guided by an advisory youth and adult group. Based on the gained knowledge and experience the following tools were developed: E-Learning programme, the Young People Toolkit and 12 –week session plan, the Community of Practice guide and ethical guidance documents. You can find them [here](#).

*Would you like to start a Community of Practice in your country? Contact: [kate.d'arcy@beds.ac.uk](mailto:kate.d'arcy@beds.ac.uk)*



**WHO'S INVOLVED?**

<b>4-day training programme</b> (specialists)		<b>18</b>		<b>19</b>		<b>28</b>		<b>20</b>
<b>3-day youth facilitator training</b> (young people)		<b>4</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>5</b>		<b>4</b>
<b>Project advisory group</b> (experts and youth)		<b>2</b>		<b>19</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>2</b>
<b>Webinar</b> (specialists)		<b>18</b>		<b>30</b>		<b>11</b>		<b>12</b>

University London

**100**

**178**

Eurochild

# WE ALL PARTICIPATE

FREYA AND FABIAN BECAME YOUTH FACILITATORS AFTER THE TWO DAY LEAP TRAINING BY STICHTING ALEXANDER IN THE NETHERLANDS. READ THEIR STORIES HERE.

**Both Freya and Fabian were asked by their care institution Jarabee whether they would like to participate in LEAP against sexual violence.**

**FABIAN:** "I was directly sold on participating in the LEAP project. Sexual violence against young people is a very important topic. There should be more freedom to discuss it."

**FREYA:** "I have experienced sexual violence myself. Before LEAP training I wasn't able to talk about it. After we had sessions on 'advocacy through participation against sexual violence' we became LEAP facilitators. During the training we learned how to break the taboo on talking about sexual violence and how to talk about it publicly."

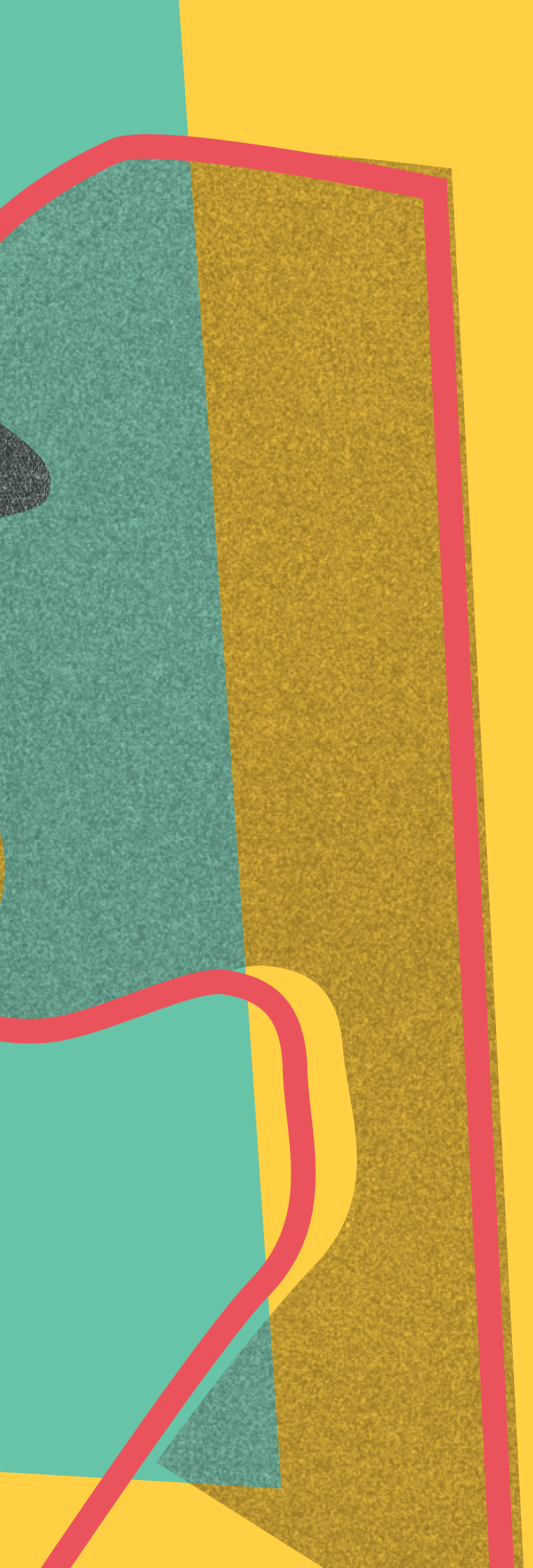
**FABIAN:** "I can't believe it's dangerous for young people to talk about what they've experienced! Young people should feel heard and need to be supported in an appropriate manner, and you'll know what to do just by listening carefully. Thanks to your support I'm strong enough to make the right decisions."

**FREYA:** "My advice for professionals? Listen and ask what's best for the young person. If you have been sexually abused: please talk about it! Thanks to sharing my story, I can sleep again. Know that you are not alone and that you will be heard! I can't stipulate

**FREYA** (19 YEARS OLD  
LEAP FACILITATOR):

**"Thanks to sharing  
my story, I can  
sleep again."**





**FABIAN** (17 YEARS OLD  
LEAP FACILITATOR):

**"I wish to be strengthened by doing what is right for me."**

this enough. Sexual violence happens all over the world. Don't isolate yourself. Try to share your story, like I did."

**FABIAN:** "In my past I was kept small. Therefore, accepting authority is a challenge for me. I'm not a bad person. I wish to be strengthened by doing what is right for me. I want to go into the big world and discover it myself. Jarabee leaves me enough space to go my own way and supports me with my steps."

**FREYA:** "I had a social worker who manipulated me and tried to belittle me. It is important to know you can politely reject wrong support and look for help that meets your needs."

**FABIAN:** "I feel I'm no longer alone with my problem. From day one of the LEAP project I felt safe to say anything I wanted and respected on every level. LEAP feels like a family where we work on this challenging problem together. Margriet (Stichting Alexander, project worker) is so open and has such positive energy. You can't stop going with her flow. She makes me smile."

**FREYA:** "I hope sexual violence won't ever happen again in the world. I'm afraid this dream won't come true, though."

**FABIAN:** "It is my wish to inspire people to stand up for themselves. Let them know that they can make things happen themselves!"

# LEAP practitioners

READ HERE HOW MARITA, LEO AND SOFIE, THREE DUTCH LEAP PARTICIPANTS, EXPERIENCED LEAP.



**"Awareness raising at schools to prevent sexual violence is necessary."**

**MARITA SMITS VAN WAESBERGHEN**  
(NURSE AT FOCUS OP ZORG)

"It's important that children can make their voices heard and that they are listened to. People that hide their feelings are unable to set their boundaries and often get addicted to cigarettes, alcohol and drugs. People who work with these children have to make them feel safe to open up. It is necessary to teach more in schools on the topic of sexuality. How can you set your boundaries? LEAP can go out there with young ambassadors."



**"The LEAP approach protected my clients! They felt at ease and safe to share their stories."**

**LEO JACOBS**  
(DUTCH PRACTITIONER)

"If you have experienced a trauma in your youth as child or young person, it's best for you to process it as soon as possible. As a practitioner you need to level with your (young) client. Would a therapy with animals (Bulgaria) or outdoor therapy (Belgium) work for him or her? From my experience it is best to involve peers who speak the same language. Our girls are very impressed by the LEAP project. In this project they could speak for themselves. I felt we were a network of kindred spirits. In the future we would definitely like to work with the PULSE Foundation Bulgaria."



**"We need to make talking about the subject of sexual violence normal."**

**SOFIE VRIENDS** (DIRECTOR NATIONAL YOUTH INSTITUTE, MEMBER DUTCH ADVISORY GROUP)

"You don't know what you're missing if you've never done participatory work. In the advisory group we've looked at the proposals and given feedback and advice. Research suggests that many young people aren't ready to talk about sexual violence. Therefore, the way you talk about it is very important. The biggest challenge is to create a trauma sensitive space. Within the Netherlands at the moment we miss this trauma sensitive attention. Just providing sex education to children in schools is not enough. Therefore, I'm really happy with LEAP. We've learned a lot from each other."



Young people Toolkit produced by the University of Bedfordshire. It provides the necessary resources for a 3-day Youth Facilitator training and 12-session life skills and leadership programme for young people who have experienced, or are at risk of experiencing, sexual violence and for service providers working with them.

**MARGRIET FOUNDATION ALEXANDER:**  
**"According to our youth group, merchandise is the key to raise awareness!"**



Animation made by the UK youth group to highlight awareness of exploitation.



Trees of participation (Bulgaria, CoP)

# LEAP products

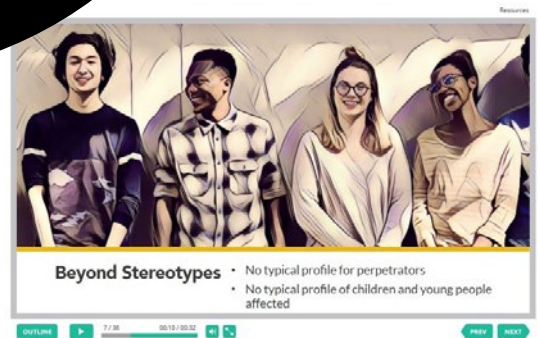
Within the LEAP project, products were developed to strengthen participatory practice amongst service providers and increase young people's participation. The aim is to reduce levels of sexual violence in Europe.



The LEAP newsletter was written by LEAP partners and developed by Terre des hommes Hungary and has reached over 8000 people worldwide. [You can sign up here!](#)



Folding flyer made by a Dutch youth group to make it easier for young people and caretakers to talk about sexual violence.




E-learning: an on-line module which takes practitioners through the key concepts of participatory practice when working with young people affected by sexual violence.



Bracelet to raise awareness for participation against sexual violence.

# AROUND THE WORLD

## LEAP EUROPEAN PARTNERS



**UK** *The International Centre:*  
Committed to increasing understanding of, and improving responses to child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking in local, national and international context.

**THE NETHERLANDS** *Stichting Alexander:* Talking about sex, relationships and risk is not common practice in the Netherlands.

**ROMANIA** *Terre des hommes:*  
Through LEAP, participatory methods against Sexual Violence are promoted now by trained specialists and Young People.

**UK** *Barnardo's SECOS:* LEAP has provided fantastic participation opportunities for young people. One example was travelling to New York to be heard at the United Nations Convention.

**HUNGARY** *Terre des hommes:* Our LEAP newsletter reaches 8.000 people.

**BULGARIA** *PULSE Foundation:* The four youth facilitators have implemented a meaningful empowerment program with over 20 participants. Part of the participants will continue to work after the project is completed.



**During the European partner meeting in Amsterdam at Stichting Alexander in June 2017 all 5 national partners were interviewed about the benefits of LEAP work in promoting participatory approaches in supporting and preventing sexual violence among young people.**

**What participatory work did your organisation already do?**

All 5 partners have a strong commitment to participation in their work. They empower vulnerable young people in a participatory way. Pamela from SECOS has been a strong advocate for participation throughout the project and has shared the benefits within her organisation Barnardo's – which operates across the UK to support young people affected by child sexual exploitation. Terre des hommes has been an ambassador for children in 35 countries for over 50 years!

In Romania and Hungary they support young people in being safe and becoming resilient in order to prevent them from being trafficked. Stichting Alexander specialises in the area of participatory youth research and has delivered participatory training and coaching programmes for young people and professionals since 1993. Last but not least, the PULSE Foundation is a crisis centre in Bulgaria. It has 18 years of experience in working with multidisciplinary specialists in direct services. Over 400 volunteers between



**“LEAP has unveiled new horizons for youth participation.”**

**JULIA BULGARIA**

the ages of 12-22 work with PULSE; they also have the opportunity to become paid workers after volunteering.

**What are your LEAP stories of change?**

“LEAP was an opportunity for the PULSE Foundation to share our successes in participatory work” Julia says. She explains that in Bulgaria many practitioners, including teachers, don’t believe that children are really affected by sexual violence. LEAP offered an opportunity to raise awareness among practitioners that it is necessary to believe children and young people in order to build self-confidence. Creating space and time for them is essential. Julia smiles when she tells that as a result of the positive LEAP work by the youth facilitators, young women are now thinking about their future and even about going to university. She highlights the situation of an 18-year old Roma girl affected by trafficking and at risk of being married off who now has the confidence to share her views and opinions. Julia elaborates that when this young woman’s history teacher spoke with her about violence as if she were guilty, she spoke with sureness: “If it had happened to you as a child you wouldn’t speak to me like this.” All national partners are collecting Stories Of Change for both young people and practitioners and have found similar results. In Romania a youth

facilitator described LEAP as a powerful force: “We won’t be part of the problem, we will be part of the solution”.

**What LEAP activities are you most proud of?**

The UK LEAP participation group went to the UNCSW61 Conference in New York. The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

During the intensive programme they spoke about their experiences and took part in discussions about equal rights, diversity and women in sports.



**“Participation in itself protects society.”**

**IVET THE NETHERLANDS**



**“Always believe in change and the power of young people.”**

**CRISTINA ROMANIA**

Pam (UK, Barnardo’s SECOS): “The young people realised that their experience could make a difference to others. Although they felt that others attending were too important for them at first, they found they were just like them. That was a great insight for them.”

Judit (HU, Terre des hommes) is very happy that the E-learning programme which LEAP partners have developed from their 4-day training for specialist services can reach practitioners working with vulnerable children in rural areas in South East Europe. Dutch young people and professionals work as equals within the Community of Practice. They feel safe enough to be themselves and even the adults share their own stories. This makes Margriet (NL, Stichting Alexander) proud. Jarabee support workers state that all young people have flourished within LEAP and they are implementing LEAP participatory methods in their practice.

### **What was challenging?**

Together partners have created a very rich and beautiful project. However, there were challenges. Ivet (NL, Stichting Alexander): “Youth care is highly demanding. Partner organisations often have to deal with work pressures and it was necessary for them to convince colleagues and management to make time and space for LEAP participation

activities. Participation is hindered most by the dominant western doctrine of “experts know what is best for seemingly vulnerable, needy and helpless people.” Changing this calls for a fundamental shift in culture.

Furthermore, national partners know that a lot of taboo and shame remains around the topic of sexual violence – it can be hard for practitioners to talk about sex with young people. Some practitioners fear these young people won’t make the right choices and on the other hand some young people feel judged by a practitioner. Also practitioners are afraid young people might become re-traumatised through participation work.



**“The young people realised their experience could make a difference to others.”**

**PAMELA UK**

**“One of our Dutch youth facilitators said: “I’ve learned more during this 2-day training than in my entire school career.”**

**MARGRIET** THE NETHERLANDS

Julia (BU, PULSE Foundation): “In our crisis centres we have the experience that some girls faint when they realise what they’ve been through. You need to create a safe place to talk about it with the right care (multidisciplinary team).” According to Ivet: “Participation in itself protects society.” She explains that young people become stronger and feel confident to share their opinions. They learn how they can make themselves safe. Despite the challenges all partners conclude: “We don’t see any reason not to do participation work: Just do it!”

#### **What did you gain?**

On a wider scale all national partners feel they have gained a European perspective on sexual violence issues and practices through their international exchange. Their knowledge has grown by finding



solutions to common challenges – for example – “How do you create support at the management level of organisations in your country for participation?” or “How do practitioners talk about sexual violence with young people?”

On the national level e.g. in The Netherlands there was very little youth participation with young people affected by sexual violence to begin with. Ivet: “LEAP offered a fantastic chance to work on such a challenging topic.” In Eastern Europe the focus lay more at school level. Therefore, Terre des hommes Romania conducted research in high schools and this confirmed that prevention awareness raising was key.

On a personal level Cristina shared: “My feelings and knowledge deepened. I understand much better how to work with young people now.” For most young people it was an eye opener that speaking up would make a difference.

#### **What is your wish?**

All LEAP partners hope that training, resources, and participatory methods, as well as their own LEAP learning, will enrich practice, empower young people and continue to influence others. All partners want to continue working with young people and practitioners in the LEAP-way. The results will speak for themselves!



**“I hope our learning project goes far beyond our countries.”**

**JUDIT** HUNGARY



# DO'S AND DON'TS IN PARTICIPATION

Young people are our future. Participation can help solve traumas and empower young people. It can help them talk about their trauma and offer some support.

**INVESTMENT** *Respect Relationship*

*Attention* **ASK QUESTIONS**

**GUIDANCE** *Listen Being informed*

**SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

Young people **DARE TO SAY NO**  
take the lead *Young people friendly*

**RELINQUISH CONTROL** **LEARN TO TALK ABOUT SEX**

*Create a participation culture for practitioners.*

**PARTICIPATION IN CURRICULUM** *Check if your questions are understood by a young person.*

**NO JUDGEMENT** **DON'T TRY TO BE A YOUNG PERSON**

*Don't talk, start doing!*

**RULES** *Make young people do things for you, that you don't want to do yourself.*

The importance of participation is stipulated by the internationally binding Convention on the Rights of the Child:

**Article 12 (Respect for the views of the child):** *When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account.*



CoP Romania



Ivet and Margriet, Holland



Youth Facilitators Romania



"Words may hurt!"



Alina, Romania



Youth Advisory Board Romania



**COLOPHON**

This magazine has been produced in partnership with the International Centre. Thanks to everyone who has cooperated!

**A special thanks to:** the young people and adults in the communities of practice in Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, The Netherlands and UK who dared to speak up against sexual violence! And the European Commission for their support.

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www.ono-ono.nl



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