From 1st till 9th of September 2019 twenty-five professionals from five different countries – Spain, Italy, Latvia, Georgia and Bulgaria – gathered in Latvia to participate in an Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union Youth Mobility project called “GUIDE: Outlining Successful Strategies Against Gender-Based Violence”. Project was created as a response to the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) in the five project countries and the need for active, focused and persistently improved youth work methods in order to combat it.

Gender-based violence is a violence against a person because of their gender, and for many years, youth work organizations and communities in the five project countries have been actively involved in prevention work. Through educating young people on tolerance, human rights and equality, and supporting them through their personal trials and obstacles youth workers are building the self-confidence and support network for youngsters much needed to prevent gender-based violence.

However, there are several areas of concern that can and should be addressed in order to maximize our contribution to the preventive work regarding the rising levels of gender-based violence among the youth. Youth workers’ knowledge have to be consistently improved through expanding the available strategies and developing new competences. As there is a lack of recognition and wide visibility of the best methods in the field of youth work, little or no exchange of best practices often leads to a more time and resource consuming development of new methods from the ground up, instead of building on already existing practices. Furthermore, there is still an insufficient dialogue in society about gender-based violence and its effect on young people. These obstacles make the specialists’ work even more difficult creating additional stereotypes and harmful ideas that have to be challenged and fought against. For this we need a structured dialogue that includes both ground-level actors and policy makers.

The project aimed to unite the specialists from participating countries, equip them with already existing and tested knowledge and practical skills on combating gender-based violence and open new opportunities for future collaboration. During the project partner organizations – Asociación Mundus (Spain), Proyecto Kieu (Spain), The FutureNow (Bulgaria), Comunità Nuova (Italy), MARTA Centre (Latvia), Alternative Education Academy (Georgia) and participants from other organizations – got to know each other’s best practices in preventive work and visited several Latvian organizations – MARTA Centre, “Papardes zieds”, Centre “Dardedze”, Olaine Youth Centre, Adolescent Resource Centre, Liepāja Youth House, Association “Fathers” and others – working with issues related to violence prevention and meaningful youth work. Participants shared the best practices in working with children, adolescents and families, and developed new initiatives for future cooperation in order to adopt the new methods.

By implementation of this project 25 specialists had a chance to expand their knowledge, learn new practices and develop further cooperation in order to prevent gender-based violence in their home countries. Violence prevention is a never-ending work but well-equipped specialists with international perspective is a way forward in creating a more healthy and tolerant society that can provide to its youth an equal and nonviolent future.

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