

# Implementing intervention

The prevalence of school bullying, the intentional and persistent aggressive behaviour of students against other students, has been well documented internationally (Wendy & Havel 2004) and several anti-bullying intervention models have been developed and implemented, especially in Scandinavian and western European countries (eg. Cowie 1999; Olweus 1991).

Nevertheless, in many Mediterranean and Eastern European countries, like Greece, Cyprus and Lithuania, for example, the systematic investigation and management of the problem remain in initial stages. The Association for the Psychosocial Health of Children and Adolescents (APHCA), a scientific non-governmental organisation, located in Athens Greece – within the framework of Daphne II Programmes (JLS/DAP/2005-1/040/YC30) and with co-funding from the Greek Ministry of Health – implemented<sup>1</sup> a two year preventive project on school bullying in three European countries: Greece, Cyprus and Lithuania (Lithuania had the highest incidence of bullying internationally in 2001-2) (Wendy & Havel 2004). The project also included a western European country, Germany, which focused on a more advanced area of study – the bullying of teachers.

The project (completed in March 2008): assessed the needs of students 11 to 15 years of age in regards to bullying using quantitative (ie. questionnaires), as well as qualitative methods (ie. focus groups); developed school-based awareness raising programmes (ie. preventive psycho-educational groups with students and teachers); and developed and



disseminated preventive guidelines for students, teachers and parents.

The project brought together bullying experts from the four countries and contributed to the recognition of school bullying as an existing problem through a presentation in the Educational Affairs Committee of the Parliament (in Greece), as well as conferences, workshops and press conferences that had a national impact, especially in Greece, Cyprus and Lithuania. Also, results<sup>2</sup> from the school-based awareness raising intervention, which was developed and piloted in Greece and Cyprus, showed that even brief sensitisation groups with students and teachers can make a difference. Students in Greece reported that they became better able to communicate incidences of bullying with school staff and their peers and to deal with bullies more creatively than before the implementation of intervention. Teachers acknowledged their need for further specialised training and support in implementing school-based preventive projects.

The project promoted the idea of communication and respect of individual needs and rights between students, students and teachers

*School bullying: what we learnt from a two year preventive programme...*

and among school staff, so they can all contribute to a violence-free school.

#### References

Cowie H (1999) 'Peers helping peers: Interventions initiatives and insights', *Journal of Adolescence*, Vol. 22 (4), 433-6.

Olweus D (1991) 'Bully/Victim Problems Among Schoolchildren: Basic Facts and Effects of a School-Based Intervention Program', in D Pepler & K Rubin (Eds.), *The Development and Treatment of*

*Childhood Aggression*, p. 411-448, Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Wendy M G & Havel Y (2004) 'Bullying, Physical Fighting and Victimization' in Currie C et al (Eds), *People's Health in Context: International Report from the HSBC 2001/02 Survey*, p. 133-144 WHO Policy Series: Health policy for children and adolescents Issue 4, WHO Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen.

<sup>1</sup> Members of the APHCA team (alphabetically): H Assimopoulos PhD, S Diareme PhD, D Giannakopoulou Psych.D, T Hatzipemos MSc, G Konida MSc, A Sigala and E Soumaki MD

<sup>2</sup> Results from the statistical data are available upon request



John Tsiantis MD, DPM, FRC Psych  
Professor of Child Psychiatry,  
Scientific Director of APHCA,  
President of European Union of  
Medical Specialists (UEMS), Child &  
Adolescent Psychiatry Section

APHCA  
Aghiou Ioannou Theologou 19  
Cholargos 15561  
Athens  
Greece

Tel: +30 210 6546524  
Fax: +30 210 6522396

itsianti@med.uoa.gr  
www.epsype.gr