



AWARENESS RAISING KIT

version 1.0



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Introduction

We herewith present you an awareness raising kit with basic information for parents and legal guardians, children, teachers, policy makers, organisations and stake holders. It contains free cards and a poster which address child sexual abuse and aims to raise awareness for the topic.

There are free cards for children, which sum up the most important messages about their right to decide about their body, to speak up for themselves, and the right of children for help and support.

The free cards for adults implicate a respectful educational style, which will strengthen children. Sexualized violence can happen to any child! To be aware of this fact, informing children, believing and strengthening them will increase the safety of children!

The poster can help adults who are confronted with the suspicion of child sexual abuse to react properly.

The cards and the poster can be downloaded here:

<http://www.preventingchildsexualabuse.eu/>

About child sexual abuse

Child sexual abuse (also called sexualized violence) can be sexual comments or sexual acts directed towards children by adults or older adolescents. 1 in 5 European children experiences child sexual abuse. Around 90 % of the cases will not be revealed.

Child sexual abuse usually does not happen "out of the blue", it is much more a process, beginning with violating the child's right to intimacy and privacy borders and sexualizing the relationship to the child. We distinguish between accidental border violations which violate the privacy of children, sexualized infringement which doesn't happen "by accident" and sexualized violence. This includes all criminal liable acts of violence. You can find the legal situation in Austria under: <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/>.

For information on European country research and reports per country visit <http://www.ecpat.org/resources>

There is no clear line between accidental border violations, sexualized infringement and sexualized violence. Because of this it is often really difficult to recognize where the violence begins.

Sexual abuse can happen on the internet as well. In many cases, parents are not aware of the child's online activity, or if the child has been contacted in chatrooms or social platforms. Parents can use filtering programs to protect their child, but it is crucial to establish a good connection with children, so they will tell about their experiences online.

Children who experience sexualized violence can show different symptoms. The European report on preventing child maltreatment (World Health Organisation, 2013) stresses that maltreated children have lower educational attainment, lower attendance at school and are less likely to finish high school or attend university.

The degree to which educational attainment will be impaired will be influenced by the child's environment such as the family, the community or society as a whole. Because the whole environment has such a great impact, it is necessary that adults become active partners in the prevention work.

Parents are the most important people in the life of children, but the protection of children is a common task, concerning the whole society!

Child sexual abuse is still a topic, which is hardly discussed and talked about, it is often a secret and a taboo. Raising awareness about child sexual abuse is one key element in preventing it.

The role of teachers, organisations and policy makers:

Teachers can inform themselves about sexualized violence, how to handle possible cases of sexual abuse and to protect children, and how to do prevention work. Teachers can attend further training and pass their knowledge on to parents. This will help to overcome still existing myths and false assumptions concerning child sexual abuse.

The teachers manual, which has been tested and evaluated in the "Breaking the silence together project", offers further information for teachers and methods and material for preventive work in classrooms. It can be found on the project homepage.

Organisations like schools or day care centres have a big responsibility for the safety of children. There must be strategies of prevention and of protection. Preventive strategies empower and inform children and adults to recognize and avoid abusive situations and to create a safe environment. Protective strategies provide information, how to react appropriately and confident when facing an abusive situation or handling a suspected case of child sexual abuse. There must be an agreement on an internal procedure for action.

More information on how schools can develop and implement preventive structures can be found in the Community Prevention program, which can be downloaded on the project homepage.

Policy makers and the society can contribute their share, if they take children's rights and the importance of a safe and healthy childhood on their agenda. To disseminate information and to raise the safety of children it is necessary to support and finance prevention programs and child protection centers. Policy makers can pursue to implement prevention structural in the education of teachers and in the adult education of parents. By doing this, they raise awareness for child sexual abuse and the responsibility of the whole society to protect children from harm.

Free Cards for children and adults

The cards and the poster can be used in an informative way by talking with children and adults about the content of the messages, the protection of children and where to get help. It can also be used in an educative way by speaking about the messages in detail and working long term.

The cards can be printed/downloaded from the website in a small format or as big as a poster that can be presented in various rooms like classrooms.

On the following pages you will find the images and main messages of the free cards and the poster.

Free cards for children: You can decide about your body!

You can decide about your body!

- You can decide who is coming close to you.
- You can decide if you want to be touched.
- You can speak about situations which give you a strange feeling.
- Grownups have to support you thereby!

A kiss from your aunt, a hug from your grandfather, a tickling game with your sibling or playing doctor with a friend.

These touches can be comfortable or uncomfortable.

Uncomfortable touches can give us uncomfortable feelings. We might feel scared, angry, helpless or nervous.

Everybody has the right to seek for help if she or he is touched in an unpleasant way or if she or he feels unpleasant!

Think about adults you trust. You can ask them for help if you feel uncomfortable.

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Children should be enabled to decide about their body – to do so, they need adults to encourage them.

Children should decide for themselves who is coming close to them.

And they should decide how they want to be touched. Adults and children have to accept their decisions. Adults should support children to protect their borders.

You have rights!

You have rights!

*Breaking
the Silence
together*

- You are allowed to voice your opinion.
- You have the right to be protected.
- You have the right to get help.

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the Silence
together*

Children have the right to voice their opinion. That means you have the right to tell what you think, how you feel and what you like or dislike. You can also write down your feelings or you can draw what you think.

Children have the right to be protected. Nobody is allowed to abuse or neglect children. No one is allowed to hurt or mistreat them.

Children have to be protected from sexual abuse. That means that no one is allowed to touch you in an unpleasant way. No one is allowed to talk to you about adult sexuality or show you pictures of it. You have the right to get help if someone does not respect your rights.

These are some of your rights. You can find more of them here:

<https://www.unicef.org/rightsite/files/unrcr-childfriendlylanguage.pdf>

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Children have rights! To inform them about children's rights will strengthen them.

Children are allowed to voice their opinion and to say "NO!" if they are confronted with unpleasant contacts.

Children have the right to be protected from abuse and harm and to get help.

Children's rights include the right to health, education, family life and play and recreation.

There are pleasant and unpleasant touches.

*Breaking
the Silence
together*

There are pleasant and unpleasant touches!

- People we know might also touch us in an unpleasant way.
- We are allowed to say "no" if we are touched in an unpleasant way.
- It's never our fault if we are touched in an unpleasant way.




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the Silence
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There are touches which feel pleasant. And there are touches which feel unpleasant. People we know and like might touch us in an unpleasant way.

This can make us feel uncomfortable. We might feel scared, angry, helpless or disgusted.

It is our right to say "No!" or "Stop!" to people who touch us in an inappropriate way. Some people can feel insulted if we say "No!" to them. But it is never our fault if they feel that way.

We are never guilty if we are touched in an unpleasant way. And we are always allowed to ask people we trust or call the child helpline 116 111 for help.

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Children should experience that they have the right of integrity of their body. No one is allowed to come close to them if they don't want it – this requires respect for the privacy of children.

Every child has the right to decide,

- by whom she or he wants to be comforted and stroked,
- by whom she or he wants to be kissed
- and how she or he feels.

Trust your feelings!

Trust your feelings!

- Trust your feelings!
- Share bad secrets!
- Ask adults for help when you are scared!
- Call the child helpline if you need help: 116 111

There are good and bad secrets.
Good secrets give us good feelings. We might be excited, happy and expectant.
We can keep those secrets to ourselves.

Bad secrets give us bad feelings. We might be scared, sad or our tummy can hurt. Some people might touch us in an unpleasant way and make a secret out of it.

We are always allowed to share secrets like that with grownups we trust. This is our right.

We can also call the child helpline to get support: 116 111

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Take children's feelings seriously and encourage them to express their emotions! Girls and boys should be able to notice and name feelings concerning themselves and others. They should be able to interact respectfully with others, developing social skills and empathy.

Children who experience sexualized violence won't talk about it out of fear, shame or loyalty. Adults can contribute to children's safety by enabling them to determine and participate, informing them about children's rights and telling them where to get help and support.

A preventive parenting style includes respecting personal boundaries and feelings of children, treating them with respect and talking about and dealing with sexuality in an age appropriate manner.

Age-adequate sex education is an important element of protecting children from sexualized assaults and violence. Children who cannot talk about their body and "normal sexuality" also cannot talk about sexualized violence. Educational books about sexuality exist for every age-group, also for children with disabilities.

Further information about sexual education and the importance in preventing sexual abuse can be found in the booklet for parents and caregivers "How to protect children from sexual violence".

Sexual education and prevention may not be single, temporally limited offers. Moreover they should be attitudes in the whole education.

Free cards for adults:

Successful prevention programs include children as well as adults. Adults are responsible for the protection of children!

Every adult and the public should be sensitized to recognize sexualized violence as a real existing problem and not to deny it as a taboo. Prevention work has to clarify and inform about myths, legends and facts around the topic sexualized violence.

In many cases sexualized assaults are one-time incidents – but the closer the relationship between offender and child, the greater the danger that sexualized violence will occur over a longer period of time. The majority of the offenders are men and up to 90 % of them come from the child's intimate social environment and family (BMI, 2018). This makes clear that the warning "Don't go anywhere with strangers!" can't sufficiently protect children against sexualized violence. On the contrary: this warning conveys a false picture of reality causes fear and leads to a false sense of security concerning the children's social environment.

More information for parents on how to protect their children can be found in the parents' brochure, it can be downloaded here: <http://www.preventingchildsexualabuse.eu/>

Strengthen your children!

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Strengthen your children!

- Support children to participate.
- Allow children to decide for themselves.
- Treat children with respect!



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From early childhood on children should be enabled to participate. There are decisions that can be taken with children: "What are we going to cook today?", "Which shirt do you want to wear today?", "Where are we going at the weekend?"

Children train to decide for themselves with these kind of participation opportunities. Their will is being strengthened and they learn to speak up for themselves.

Children should equally being supported when they dislike something and they should be respected with their decisions. Thereby they can learn that they have their own borders which have to be respected. If we show children our borders and respect theirs, they will learn to respect those of others, too.

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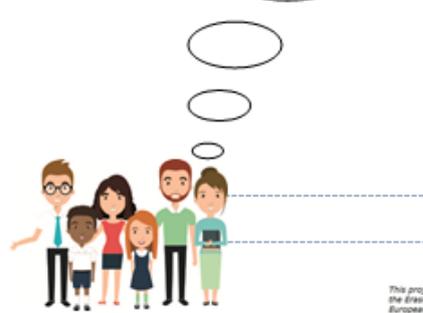
Empowerment and participation will strengthen the self-determination of children. Self-determination means the ability of making informed choices and speaking up for oneself. Respecting the will and the decisions of children will help them to develop social skills like empathy and responsibility.

Inform your children!

Inform your children!

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- Explain children their rights.
- Speak with children about their body, feelings, borders and sexuality.
- Tell your children where to get help.





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Children have many rights and these have to be respected by us. Children also have to know their rights in order to be safer. They should be taught that they have the right to voice their opinion, that nobody is allowed to neglect or abuse them, that they have the right to be protected from any violence.

Children are more likely to ask for help if they know what's right and wrong. They will feel more confident to talk to an adult that is explaining and respecting children's rights.

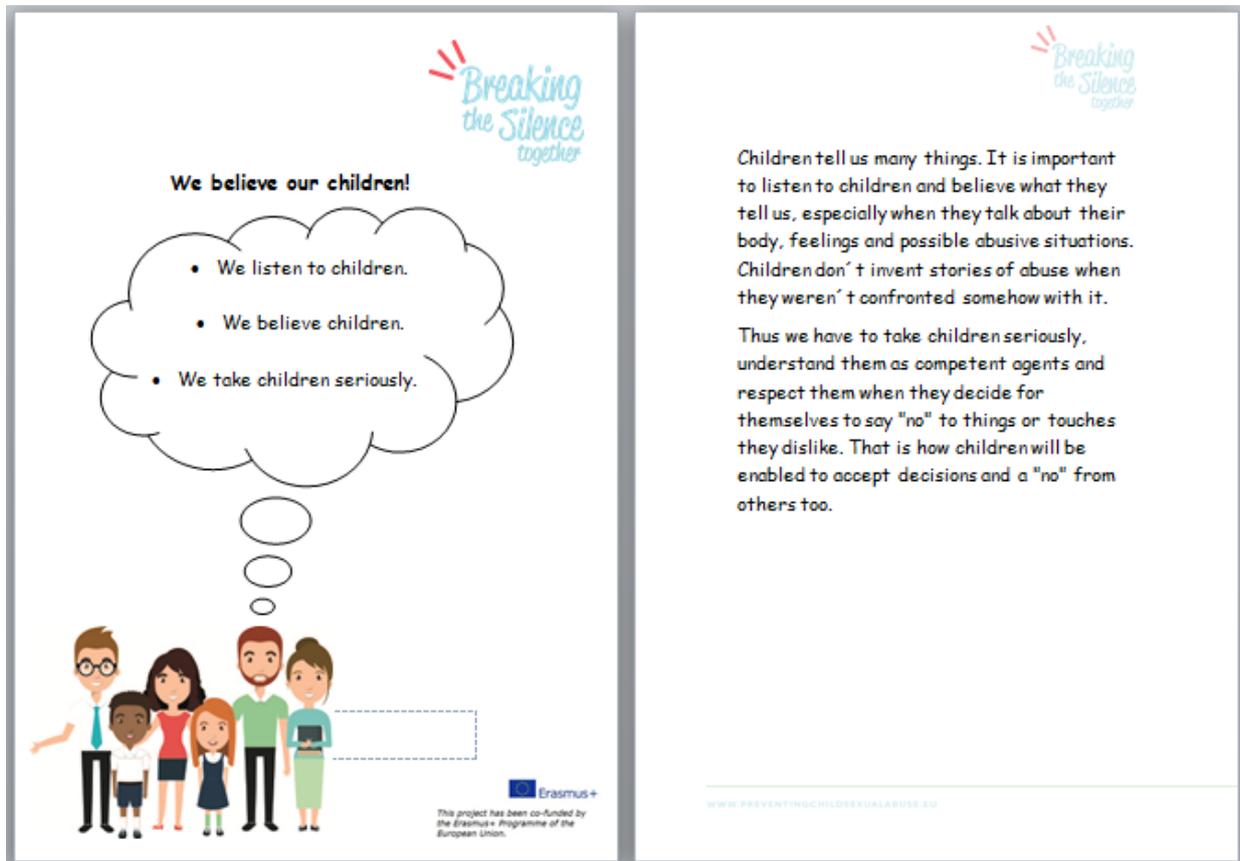
Children also have to learn about their body, feelings, borders and sexuality. Informed children are safer because they can't be fooled that easily.

Because it is never their fault if they experience any kind of violence they have to be told where to get help whenever they feel uncertain. Children can be encouraged to name adults they trust.

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To be informed helps children to demand their rights. The Convention on the rights of the child has been specified in 1989, since then, all countries of the world, except the US and Somalia, have ratified the Convention. Austria signed the declaration in 1990. Since 2011 the Children's Rights are part of the Austrian Constitution (<http://www.kinderrechte.gv.at>). Children's rights consider the vulnerable character of the child. They imply the necessity to protect them. It means to grant a particular assistance to them and to give a protection adapted to their age and to their degree of maturity.

Believe your children!



The infographic is divided into two panels. The left panel features the 'Breaking the Silence together' logo at the top right. Below it, the heading 'We believe our children!' is followed by a thought bubble containing three bullet points: 'We listen to children.', 'We believe children.', and 'We take children seriously.'. Below the thought bubble is an illustration of a diverse group of five adults and three children. The right panel also features the logo at the top right and contains two paragraphs of text. At the bottom of the right panel, there is a URL: WWW.PREVENTINGCHILDSEXUALABUSE.EU. At the bottom of the left panel, there is an Erasmus+ logo and a small text box stating: 'This project has been co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.'

We believe our children!

- We listen to children.
- We believe children.
- We take children seriously.

Children tell us many things. It is important to listen to children and believe what they tell us, especially when they talk about their body, feelings and possible abusive situations. Children don't invent stories of abuse when they weren't confronted somehow with it.

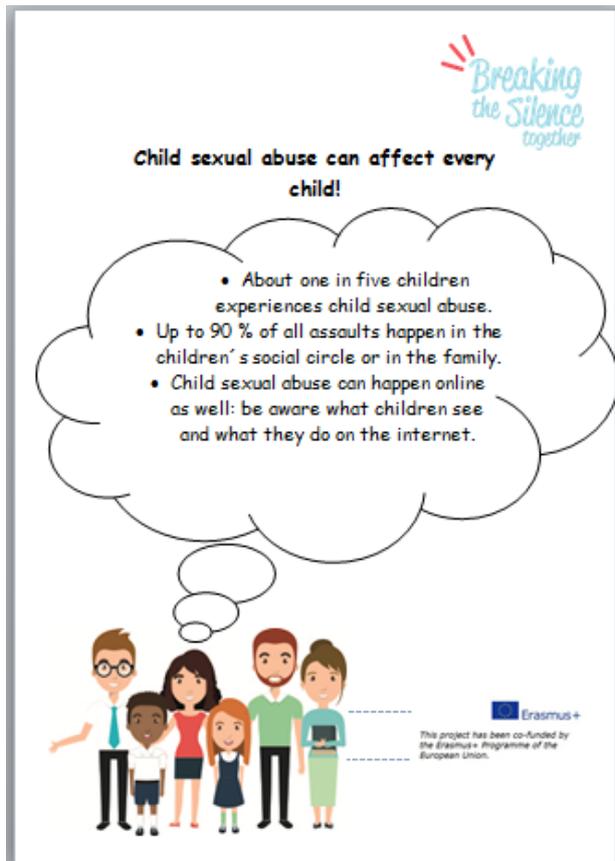
Thus we have to take children seriously, understand them as competent agents and respect them when they decide for themselves to say "no" to things or touches they dislike. That is how children will be enabled to accept decisions and a "no" from others too.

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If a child tells you about situations of abuse, the probably most important thing is to believe the child. Sexual abuse often is a secret. Making this secret public can stop the offender. Listening to children, taking them seriously and treating them with respect will encourage them to disclose possible situations of abuse. Get help for yourself! Contact a child protection centre or the child- and youth welfare system; they will support you and your child.

Child sexual abuse can affect every child!



Child sexual abuse can affect every child!

- About one in five children experiences child sexual abuse.
- Up to 90 % of all assaults happen in the children's social circle or in the family.
- Child sexual abuse can happen online as well: be aware what children see and what they do on the internet.

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The high prevalence of child sexual abuse makes the prevention imperative.

We can support our children by informing them about their rights, their body and sexual development. We can be a contact partner for all kinds of questions and stimulate conversations in times with only few direct questions. We can take children seriously with all their concerns and questions and signalize that we believe what they tell us.

We support children by informing ourselves and learning that most abusive situations happen by persons within the social circle of the child.

Because the social circle forms itself online as well, grownups have to be aware what children see, hear and who they talk to via smart phones, tablets and computers.

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It is estimated, that in the European Union one in five children suffers sexual abuse. In the Austria prevalence study (ÖIF, 2011) 28 % of women reported sexualized violence in their childhood, 21 % experienced sexual abuse with physical contact. 12 % of men reported sexualized violence; abuse with physical contact was experienced by 8 % of men. These numbers show the high prevalence. Since sexual abuse is mostly a secret and hardly ever talked about, it is still hard to imagine that this incredible large number of children is affected, and that it might happen to children we know and care about.

Poster

Awareness can lead to a higher disclosure rate of cases of sexual abuse. How parents or caretakers react when a child tells that she or he has been abused, may help or be harmful to the child. It is important to remain calm and rational, even though it is very difficult to imagine an adult might harm a child in a sexual way.

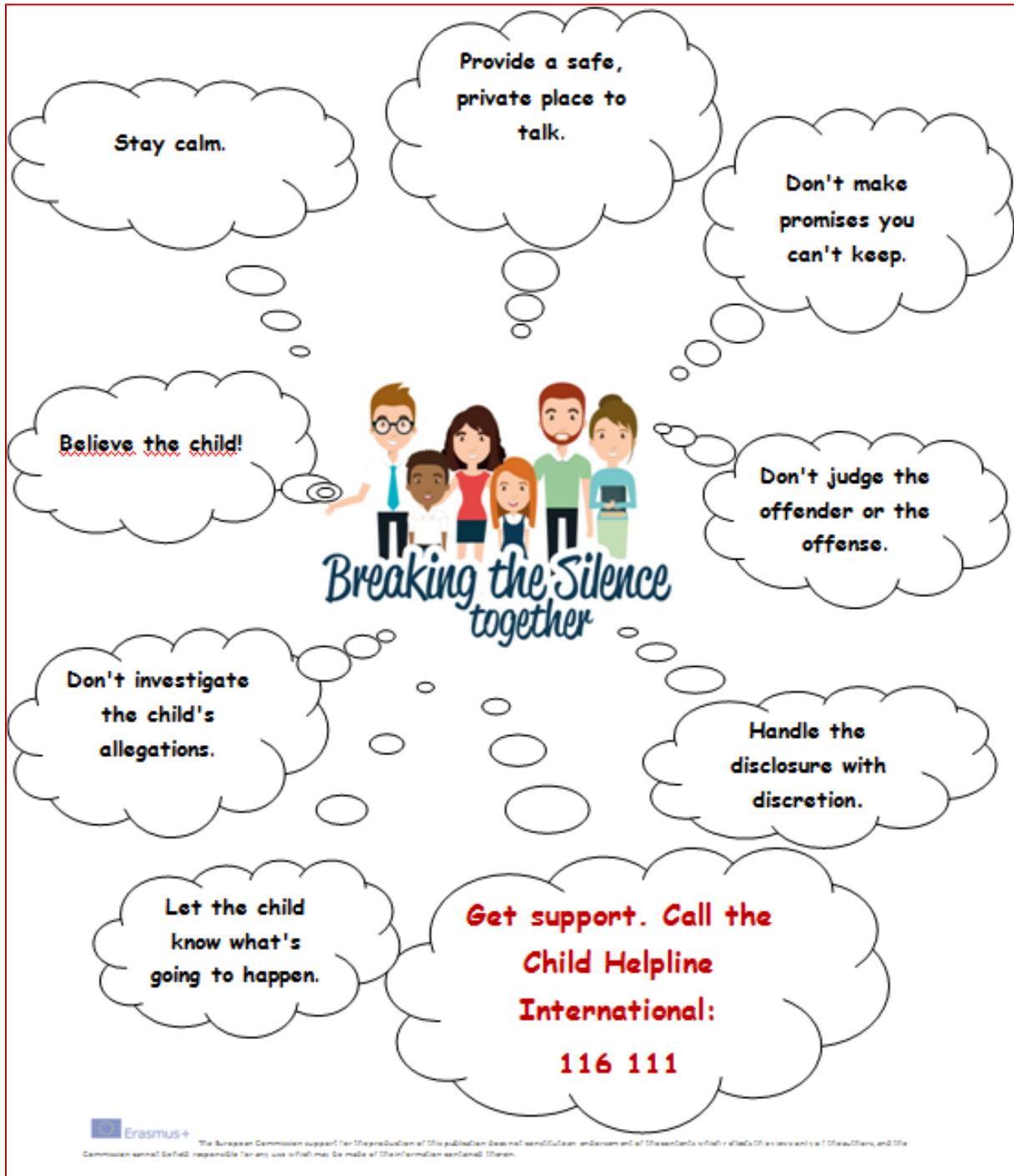
The provided poster sums up information how to handle a suspicion or a disclosure (CCAN, 2000).

- **Believe the child.** The child needs to know that there is an adult who believes him or her and that will be helpful. The adult should not judge what the child is saying or evaluate the child's statements.
- **Stay calm.** If your facial features or emotional outburst reveal that you are shocked, angry, disgusted, or otherwise upset, the child may not tell everything about the abuse and may take back the disclosure that has already been made.
- **Provide a safe, private place to talk.** Make sure that the talk takes place in a private place. Tell the child that you have to tell someone who can help the child handle the situation in the best way possible. Always let the child know that you are going to tell someone else and that the reason you are telling another person is so that person can help him or her be safe.
- **Don't make promises you can't keep.** If you make a promise which you don't keep, the child learns that you are another adult who cannot be trusted. While teachers cannot always protect the child from abuse, they may be the person who provides the support which can have a lasting positive impact on the child's life.
- **Don't judge the offender or the offense.** If you start to put down the offender, the child may take up for the offender and begin to defend the person, whom they often love. Once a child starts to defend the offender, they will often recant the original disclosure and not tell if the abuse happens again.
- **Report immediately.** It is essential that you let the child know that you are going to have to tell someone else about what the child has told you. As a citizen and especially as a professional who works with children you need to report to the competent authorities any situation that puts children at risk.
In Austria, a report to the child and youth welfare is mandatory!
- **Handle the disclosure with discretion.** Even though the reporting is mandatory, it is very important to let the child know that you will handle the disclosure with discretion, that only the people that can help in an effective manner will know about this situation, and not everybody in the school (neither all the teaching staff or the other students). In order to do so, it is important to have a clear understanding of how and to who inform about the situation within the school.
- **Let the child know what's going to happen.** Give the child as much information as you can about what will happen after the disclosure. You may not be able to answer all the questions. Be honest. Tell the child when you don't know the answer.
- **Don't investigate the child's allegations.** Leave the investigation to the professionals. Once you have enough information to request an investigation by making a report, do not ask the child any further questions. Asking questions may create problems for the investigation or prosecution later on.
- **Get support for yourself.** For your own well-being it is important that you deal with your feelings about hearing the details of the disclosure. Sometimes talking to the school counsellor or a professional from a specialized organization working on this issue may be helpful.

Make sure that after a disclosure a child knows that:

- it is good that she or he told you about the abuse,
- you believe her or him,
- It is not her or his fault, responsible is always the offender,
- you will take steps to stop the violence and protect the child.

You can help children, if you suspect child sexual abuse!



The free cards and the poster, more information about the project, child sexual abuse and the other materials of this project can be found and downloaded here:

<http://www.preventingchildsexualabuse.eu/>

Literature:

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available at: http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/217018/European-Report-on-Preventing-Child-Maltreatment.pdf