

Call for expressions of interest for inclusion in a pool of experts

International expert group on revisiting the definition of school bullying in preparation for the World Anti-Bullying Forum 2023

The UNESCO Chair on Tackling Bullying in Schools and Cyberspace, with support from UNESCO Section for Health and Education and the World Anti-Bullying Forum, launches a call for expression of interest for the establishment of an international expert group on revisiting the definition of school bullying in preparation for the World Anti-Bullying Forum (hereby the “WABF”) in 2023.

1. Background

In 2021, UNESCO and the World Anti-Bullying Forum (WABF) co-convened a working group (WG) to revisit and propose revisions to the definition of school bullying. This was a direct follow-up to the request expressed by the French Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports for a more inclusive definition of school bullying, in preparation for the [International Conference on School Bullying](#) organized jointly with UNESCO in November 2020.

The [Recommendations by the Scientific Committee on preventing and addressing school bullying and cyberbullying](#), published on the occasion of the International Conference on School Bullying, included a series of suggestions on how to revise the commonly used definition of bullying and adopt a more inclusive definition that would reflect the growth of understanding in bullying prevention and interventions, and help researchers, practitioners and policy makers to develop more comprehensive and targeted initiatives to tackle bullying in all its forms.

Building on these recommendations, the working group, composed of members mainly drawn from the WABF Scientific Committee and the Scientific Committee who developed the Recommendations for the 2020 International Conference on School Bullying,¹ met virtually on several occasions in 2021 to produce a proposed revised definition of school bullying.

Existing definition	Proposed revised definition
School bullying is an unwanted aggressive behaviour that is repeated over time and	School bullying is in-person and online behaviour between students within a social network that causes physical, emotional or social harm to targeted students. It is characterized by an imbalance of power that is enabled or inhibited by the social and institutional norms and context of

¹ The Working Group was chaired by **Prof. James O’Higgins Norman**, UNESCO Chair on Tackling Bullying in Schools and Cyberspace and Director of DCU National Anti-Bullying Research Centre, Ireland. Members: **Prof. Christian Berger**, Professor in Education Psychology – Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Chile; **Mr. Christophe Cornu**, Senior Programme Specialist and Team Leader, Section of Health and Education, Education Sector, UNESCO, France; **Prof. Donna Cross**, Professor within the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences – the University of Western Australia, Australia; **Mr. Magnus Loftsson**, Chair of the Scientific Committee, World Anti-Bullying Forum, and Head of Research and Development, Friends, Sweden; **Prof. Dorte Marie Søndergaard**, Member of the research programme ENGAGE: (Dis)Engaging Children and Young People, Danish School of Education, Aarhus University, Denmark; **Dr. Elizabeth Payne**, Education Faculty at City University of New York, and Founder and Director, The Queering Education Institute, United States; **Dr. Shoko Yoneyama**, Senior Lecturer in Asian Studies – the University of Adelaide, Japan/Australia.

involves an imbalance of power or strength.	schools and the education system. School bullying implies an absence of effective responses and care towards the target by peers and adults.
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This proposed revised definition was presented during several sessions of the third edition of the WABF held in Stockholm on 1-3 November 2021, and, with [a summary of justifications and the methodology applies](#), was made available on the WABF website for feedback by the WABF participants.

120 participants from 22 countries, predominantly (90%) from Europe and North America, provided their comments on the proposed revised definition through an online survey. More than two thirds (70%) of them agreed with the need for a revised definition, and about half (51%) of them agreed with the proposed new definition, while 40% expressed disagreement or reservations. Over two thirds of the respondents gave specific comments and suggestions to improve the clarity of the definition.

These results indicated a need for additional and broader consultations in order to receive and address more inputs and to propose an improved revised definition of bullying, which could be presented at the next WABF in 2023.

A new working group is thus being established, to guide and facilitate the consultative process. The working group is chaired by the UNESCO Chair on Tackling Bullying in schools and Cyberspace, based at the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre, Dublin, Ireland.

2. Objective and scope of work

The consultative process will involve an international group of experts to address the feedback from the delegates attending the previous WABF, and to solicit, consolidate and consider additional comments and input from other actors. These should include policymakers, practitioners, researchers, members of multilateral organizations, and children and young people. Striving for geographical representation in the comments and inputs received will be key to ensure that voices from across the world are heard.

The work of the international expert group, facilitated by the new WG, will lead to the following concrete outputs:

- An updated version of the proposed revised definition of school bullying ahead of WABF 2023 including a clear rationale for the proposed revisions. The updated revised definition will be comprehensive while at the same time usable by different audiences, e.g., operational that policymakers and practitioners could use in the field, measurable for researchers, and easy to understand by children and young people.
- An article to be published in a scientific journal shortly after WABF 2023. This article would describe the rationale and process of revisiting the definition of bullying, as well as its implications for anti-bullying policies, practice and research (TBC).

3. Membership and expectations

The international expert group will be chaired by the UNESCO Chair on Tackling Bullying in Schools and Cyberspace, with support from UNESCO Section for Health and Education and the World Anti-Bullying Forum Headquarters. It will be comprised of interested technical experts in school violence and bullying from academia, NGOs, and other UN agencies, including practitioners and young people.

Members of the expert group are expected to respond to two rounds of online consultations, to:

- a. Provide additional feedback to the revised definition of bullying proposed by the previous WG in March 2023

- b. Test and provide feedback to the proposed revised definition of bullying updated by the new WG in June - August 2023

In addition, members of the international expert group will be requested to review, comment and contribute to a draft briefing paper presenting the proposed new definition in August-October 2023.

4. Expression of interest

Expression of interest to be part of the international expert group should be sent to Sylvain Séguy (s.seguy@unesco.org) and Lisa Muszynski (l.muszynski@unesco.org) by 24 February 2022, with a short bio of 100 words at maximum including your name, gender, position, organizational affiliation and country of residence.