# GENDER AWARENESS TACKLING STEREOTYPES IN EDUCATION

# NEWSLETTER No.6

## Second GATE Consortium Meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark

**The second consortium meeting was held in Copenhagen, Denmark (4th-6th of April 2021).**

The objective of the meeting was to discuss the GATE project activities implementation progress and the milestones. The consortium members participated in two thematic conferences: *"The importance of anti-bias and normcritical perspectives in education – a panel debate with lecturers and students from nursing, social education and teaching at KP and Pädagogische Hochshule Zürich"* and *"The paradox of gender equality and cultural sensitivity in professional encounters"* and visited Lindevangskolen (one of the schools involved in the GATE-project).

Each partner organization presented the progress of the work package that it leads. Discussions on gender equality policies/practices in different partner countries have been conducted. The consortium meeting offered the participants a rich cultural programme.

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# EXPERT INTERVIEW

## EDITH MARUEJOULS, EXPERT IN GENDER AND DIVERSITY ISSUES AND REDEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC SPACES

**You have a PhD in gender geography. What was the subject of your thesis and what does the term "gender geography" cover?**

I studied the gendered distribution and redistribution of public money in the direction of leisure activities for 8-25 years old (sports clubs, cultural leisure activities, youth and sports facilities in the public space). I also had the opportunity to devote a chapter of my thesis to an experiment carried out in collaboration with the team of the Peyrouat school in Mont-De-Marsan (in the South of France) on a project for an egalitarian school, in particular on the use of the playground by girls and boys. The geography of gender studies spaces and territories from the perspective of the relationship between girls and boys and the staging of sexed stereotypes and sexism (unequal value). Gender is a scientific paradigm and geography mobilises all the study tools to test the hypotheses (cartography, objectification of uses, participant observations, face-to-face, sensitive walks, etc.).

**What prompted you to specialise in this field?**

The scientific approach which revealed inequalities in terms of the sharing of spaces, the redistribution of public money, unequal value and violence. What surprised me most at the start of my work on young people was the lack of co-education and relationships between girls and boys from childhood onwards, a process that becomes entrenched as we grow up and which occurs in every generation. Statistical anomalies too (the 80/20), inequalities are first and foremost a statistical reality which always places the social body of girls and women in a social position of vulnerability and injustice (the condition) and in fact drags along a large part of the 'others' (the small, the disabled, the less strong etc.).

**Since the creation of your study office, you have been increasingly asked to think about the transformation of school spaces in order to give them an egalitarian dimension. What spaces are we talking about and why did you choose this particular subject?**

At the beginning, following the opportunity of my thesis, it was essentially the playground. Today I work on all school buildings, from the creation of new establishments to more or less heavy restructuring. All the public-school spaces are concerned: the playground, the toilets, the refectory, the changing rooms, the foyers and the equipment that shapes the playground such as the library, the teachers' room, the school life, the extra-curricular activities etc. Beyond the building, we also work on projects with the educational teams and on the animation of the spaces. The nine years of schooling in elementary and junior high school are the only ones that constitute the captive space of the gender mix. The leisure space outside school is single-sex from the age of eight. This is an essential issue for working on the relationship between girls and boys, fighting against gender stereotypes and particularly the hierarchy that results from them. It is also a question of questioning the processes of violence and the construction of aggression.

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**Who are the partners who ask you about this issue?**

The owners of the walls, in this case: the town halls for elementary schools and the departments for secondary schools. We work throughout France in all types of contexts (rural, urban, dense, large spaces, small spaces, etc.). We also share our fieldwork and our immersion missions (between 4 and 6 months) with professionals (technicians, urban planners, architects, teachers, elected officials, project managers, programmers, etc.) by providing training and working on the conditionality of public orders (egalitarian planning note integrated into the launch of contracts).

**Do you have a standard working method for addressing these issues with your interlocutors?**

Yes, we rely heavily on the field and the scientific and expert approach that enables us to share our findings in an objective and focused manner. From the outset, we involve as many partners and professionals as possible who are concerned by the areas under study. We are committed to delegating tools, sharing findings and implementing collective intelligence. It is a question of putting professional capability at the service of a common project. We are vigilant in our approach to professions and we are very interested in the place of each person in the process of acting. We propose phases of experimentation (prefiguration of the organisation and development of public-school spaces) which are valuable for developing the "doing together" and for considering the adjustments to be made, the impact on usage, but also for removing symbolic obstacles.

**What are the criteria that enable you to measure the effectiveness of your action in this area?**

The criteria are those that were set out in the diagnosis, in particular the absence of co-education, the unequal occupation of spaces, the difficulty of sharing, "playing together, laughing together, eating together". The centrality of "girl" subjects. The climate during recess, the degree of relationship, mobility in the play areas, respect for quiet areas, children's comments, feedback from adults, etc.

**Do you see today a real will to make society evolve on the issue of equality between women and men or do you think that it is necessary to go further and faster, and if so how?**

The people I work with have the will to tackle this issue, to change their way of acting. Implementation requires a collective sharing of the issues and knowledge of the mechanisms in order to act effectively on equality issues. The difficulty lies in the recognition of expertise and the time dedicated to working together. The current organisation of French national education provides little time for joint and concerted projects, particularly on these subjects. Similarly, basic training makes too little room for an integrated approach to equality in pedagogy and the societal objective. Another element that raises questions is the dissolution of the equality issue into cross-cutting issues such as inclusion, disability, greening of spaces etc. It is as if questioning the processes of domination and the construction of aggression and violence by social gender groups says nothing about other dominations. Making equality between girls and boys a separate issue does not allow us to make progress on the systemic production of violence and inequalities between girls and boys, boys among themselves and girls among themselves. This issue is the breeding ground for much other violence. Finally, all the speeches that question the scientific approach based on gender as a paradigm of analysis deny the objective and methodological approach, which hinders the construction of tools and the evaluation of progress in terms of equality between girls and boys. Every sterile posture and debate that does not call for an objective and expert approach to this issue is a step backwards or at least a brake on progress.

***Edith Maruejouls*** *is a doctor in Geography specialising in gender and diversity issues, and an expert in the redevelopment of public spaces. As a true gender geographer, she accompanies, with her research office L'ARObE (the equality observatory research workshop) located in Bordeaux, many schools (in France and abroad) on gender equality issues. She has just published a book entitled "Faire jeu égal".*

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# *GATE PROJECT TRAINING SESSIONS*

**In September 2022** continued the training phase of the GATE project. Teachers trainings have been organized by the European Institute Foundation (Bulgaria) and the Åbo Akademi University (Finland). Teachers have been trained by the Gate project experts in deconstructing gender stereotypes in primary education using the developed under the project **toolbox.** In the next experimentation phase of the project trained teachers will organize a pilot classes with their pupils and will test the resources developed by the GATE consortium.

***11 primary school teachers took part in the training session, organized by the European Institute Foundation.***

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