

FOREWORD

In February 2001 a group of psychologists, educators, ICT experts and researchers from other fields came together in Landau, Germany, in order to discuss and deepen the concept for the VISIONARY project that had just been approved by the European Commission within the Socrates/Minerva programme.

When we started, some of us (including me) only had a rough idea of what it is like to work in a European context. Yet we looked forward to the experience of working together and meeting people from other countries in Finland, Germany, Portugal, Denmark and the UK.

When we started the VISIONARY work we became aware of the challenges of working internationally: We discussed and worked out solutions with others who were not only thousands of kilometres away but who also had another background in terms of culture, educational systems and working styles. While working together we were more or less restricted to online communication: Discussion forums, mailing lists, emails and chat.

Nevertheless, after many long discussions, misunderstandings, days and nights of hard work we reached our goals and created an international portal and this book on violence prevention in school. For some of us it was more than merely creating a product. We became curious about the ways of thinking, working and handling problems in other countries that sometimes differed a lot from the ways of thinking in our own countries. They were different and sometimes fairly unusual from our own systems, but some were worth considering and trying.

In a way, the experiences we shared were similar to the experiences many people have who work on an international level or who are interested in communicating with people in other countries by means of new technologies. Working and communicating with others, who have a different cultural background, different educational or academic systems, different working styles and even different ways of thinking can be hard and sometimes even exhausting. Nevertheless, it is challenging, enriching and worth the effort, as it widens one's own perspective and repertoire.

This book is about *violence prevention* in schools in our countries - *Denmark, Finland, Germany, Portugal* and the *UK*. Apart from giving a general introduction to violence in school and its prevention, we present many examples of good practice from our countries with a focus on resources that

are available on the Internet, especially on our website that we created within the project. We hope that through this book, we can motivate readers to deal with concepts and ways of thinking from other countries and to take a broader perspective.

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Landau, March 2003 Thomas Jäger