



From stereotypes to gender equality: Gender equality for a fairer Europe and world

As part of the Erasmus + "**Des stéréotypes à l'égalité de genre**" project, Erasmus + 2019-1-FR01-KA201-063001 coordinated by l'École Pierre de Ronsard, VAYRES (France) for which our association is committed and involved for a fairer and more equal Europe of tomorrow (<https://alegalitedegenre.com/>), we believe it is important to go deeper into this issue.

To understand the depth of the problem of gender stereotypes, it is necessary to define the main and most generic concept of stereotype.

A stereotype is a conventional model, a pre-constructed, generalized and simplistic opinion that is not based on the complexity of reality, but is mechanically repeated. These simplifications of external reality tend to be rigid, inflexible and controllable. The preconceived ideas created by these mental images are produced by anyone and help to make an abstraction, a simplification of a reality that seems too complex to us.

Gender stereotypes are therefore mental prejudices and images related to gender.

What would happen if we had the opportunity to meet people beyond the sex they belong to?

Gender stereotypes are hidden in the smallness of everyday life: idioms and thought patterns that reveal a certain configuration of the world. Such thought patterns are formed in our minds from an early age: games, books we read, criticism, compliments, and encouragement from adults, for example, were important moments in our childhood, but full of information in a way that is dismissive of what the culture of association and membership envisions. From the colors of clothing to choices about school or sports, gender stereotypes are hidden everywhere. It is precisely for this reason that equal opportunity education must begin from childhood, as it is difficult to imagine a different world for girls and boys filled with stereotypes.

These kind of stereotypes, if instilled at an early age, can have serious repercussions on adult life, such as on workplace choices and the level of emotional and relational management. The ethical and intercultural baggage of a child, as well as of an adult, is produced by the education received, by the stimuli introduced by society. All these influences produce and determine gender stereotypes and behaviours in each of us, especially in children. The risk of gender stereotypes is

to rigidly define children in tastes, propensities, roles and activities based on their gender. This creates a limited worldview, which alters the perception of reality and blocks the imagination.

Rigid roles imprison and change personality. Freedom and creativity in behaviour depend on the possibility of inventing oneself, on different models and recombining them into an original whole that represents a real choice. The simplification of the behaviour of female characters in the stories we tell our children makes the proposals addressed to the girls very poor, leaving them only two alternatives: obedience to the traditional model with the consequent renunciation of any personal aspiration, or the imitation of male models with the renunciation of "femininity". The third option, that of reconciling a woman's life with professional life, is a difficult path that publishers do not take and in which girls will be forced to commit themselves without support models.

Raising our children with phrases like "don't be a girl", "men are better at math, women are better at letters", "dolls are for girls, machines are for boys", identifies them with prefabricated models of the surroundings, limiting their imagination, their capacity for expression, the mental freedom that we envy them so much. In doing so, we limit their right to equal opportunities and we link an increasingly globalized and "mixed" world (in gender identity, in skin color, in religions, in the economy, etc...) with traditional patterns that have been obsolete for too long.

Written by Marta Buono

Translated by Francesca Carbone

www.aifed.es

aifed@aifed.es

Partners in this project: Aarnivalkea School, (Finland), DIMOTIKO SXOLEIO ALEXANDROUPOLIS. (Greece), Bluebook s.r.l., (Italy), AUX COULEURS DU DEBA, (France), SCOALA GIMNAZIALA SUTESTI, (Roumania).

