

beyond digital violence

Take action against cyber sexual violence
Closing Symposium of the ByeDV Project

March 6, 2023

Katharina Kärgel and Frederic Vobbe



This project is co-financed by the Rights, Equality and
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Outline

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1. Before **ByeDV**

2. During **ByeDV**

3. Beyond **ByeDV**



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Before ByeDV



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March 2017

The Idea:

Develop recommendations for working with children and adolescents who have experienced sexualised violence using digital media

December 2017 to April 2021

The research project HUMAN was funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research



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What is sexualised violence using digital media?

We define sexualised violence using digital media as:

- a) violating acts with which
- b) perpetrators intentionally assert their own needs
- c) at the expense of the sexual self-determination and/or consent of children and adults
- d) aided by digital media (e.g. initiation of physical assaults via chat)
- e) or in a digital setting (e.g. crime scene in the case of circulating nude pictures).

(Vobbe & Kärger 2022, S. 11)



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Why are we using the term sexualised violence using digital media instead of digitalised sexualised violence?

Digitalisation describes the increased use of digital devices and digital media in numerous aspects of daily life (Bendel 2021).

Mediatisation refers to the interplay between digital media and society, e.g. with regard to the ways in which we communicate, maintain contacts, learn, work, follow the news, spend our free time and much more (Wolf et al. 2021).



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An athletics coach requests masturbation pictures from a minor on the team..

Videos of a young person dancing and playing sports are commented on by school peers in a sexual manner.

Adolescents and adults consume videos that depict minors in sexually explicit poses.

Offline

Online

The partner of a woman with three children initiates sexual assaults via chats and through gift giving (e.g. Tablet, Drone).

A perpetrator repeatedly threatens via chat to publish videos online of a rape.

Naked pictures (de facto photo montages) of a young person circulate on WhatsApp. As a result, the girl is berated.



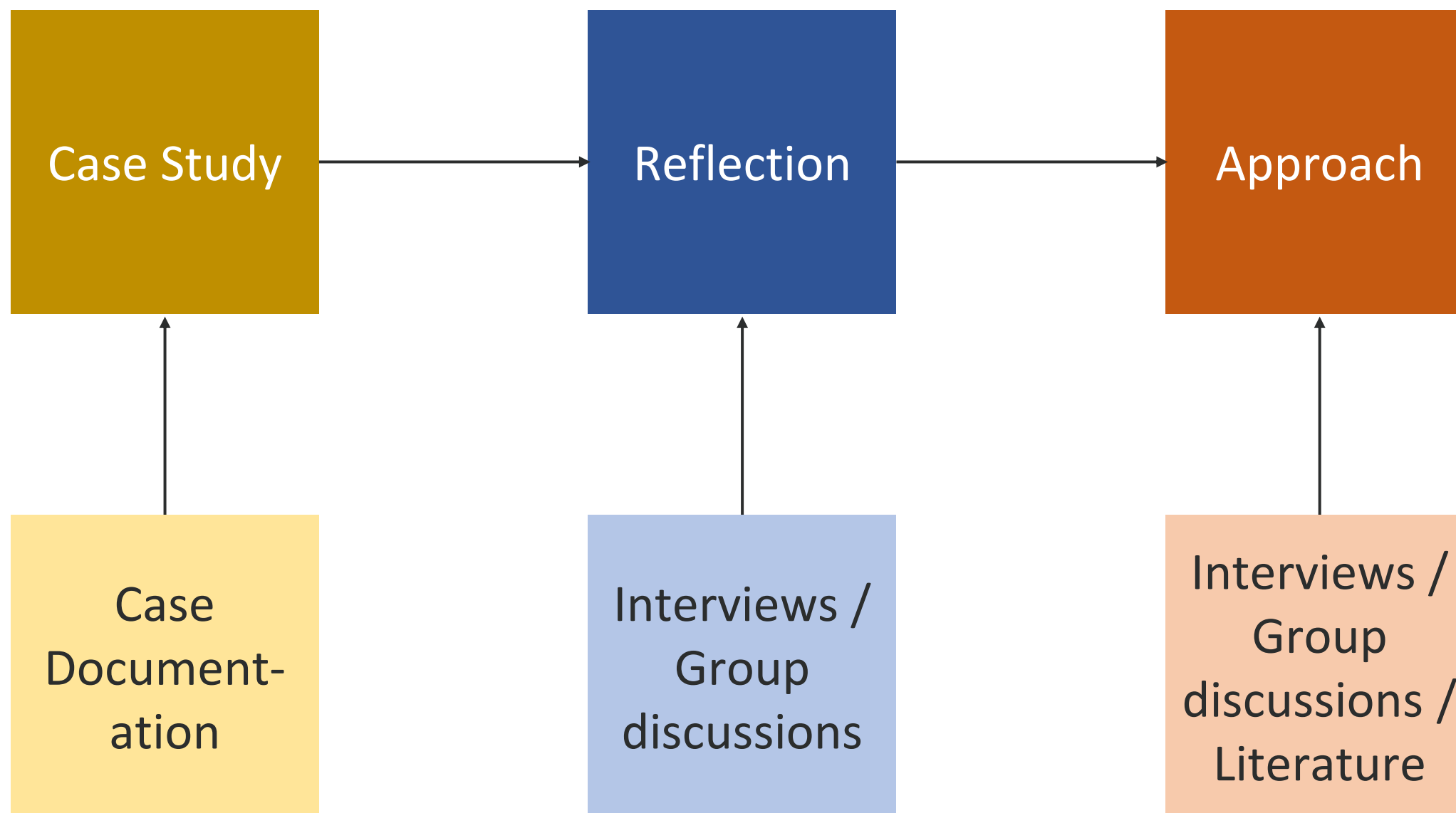
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How do the recommendations for action work?



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Excerpt from an email from a counselling centre specialising in sexualised violence

Dear ...,

[...] When you have the chance, it would be interesting for us to know why you decided to process your results the way you have - with regard to the people you want to reach [...]. Basically, the real skill lies in preparing scientific findings in such a way that as many people as possible can absorb the content and use it as a guide. Then, from our point of view, practice-theory-practice transfer would be successful.

[...] Wishing you continued success! We are excited to see how the final product will turn out.



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What goals formed the basis for designing ByeDV?

The **Goal of ByeDV** was and is:

- a. to implement recommendations in institutions that work with cases of sexualised assault against children and adolescents and
- b. to work together to develop quality criteria in the form of professional standards for prevention and intervention based on experiences and reflections.



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Implementation for this project means designing approaches (in this case: empirically developed recommendations) that are useful/applicable for specialist centres.

The usefulness/applicability depends on the interaction between the approaches and the systems in which they were designed to function (Welge et al. 2017).

A quality criterium is a factor for success when:

- It is a prerequisite for successful application.
- It is an indicator of successful application.
- It is an instrument for action, e.g. a procedure.



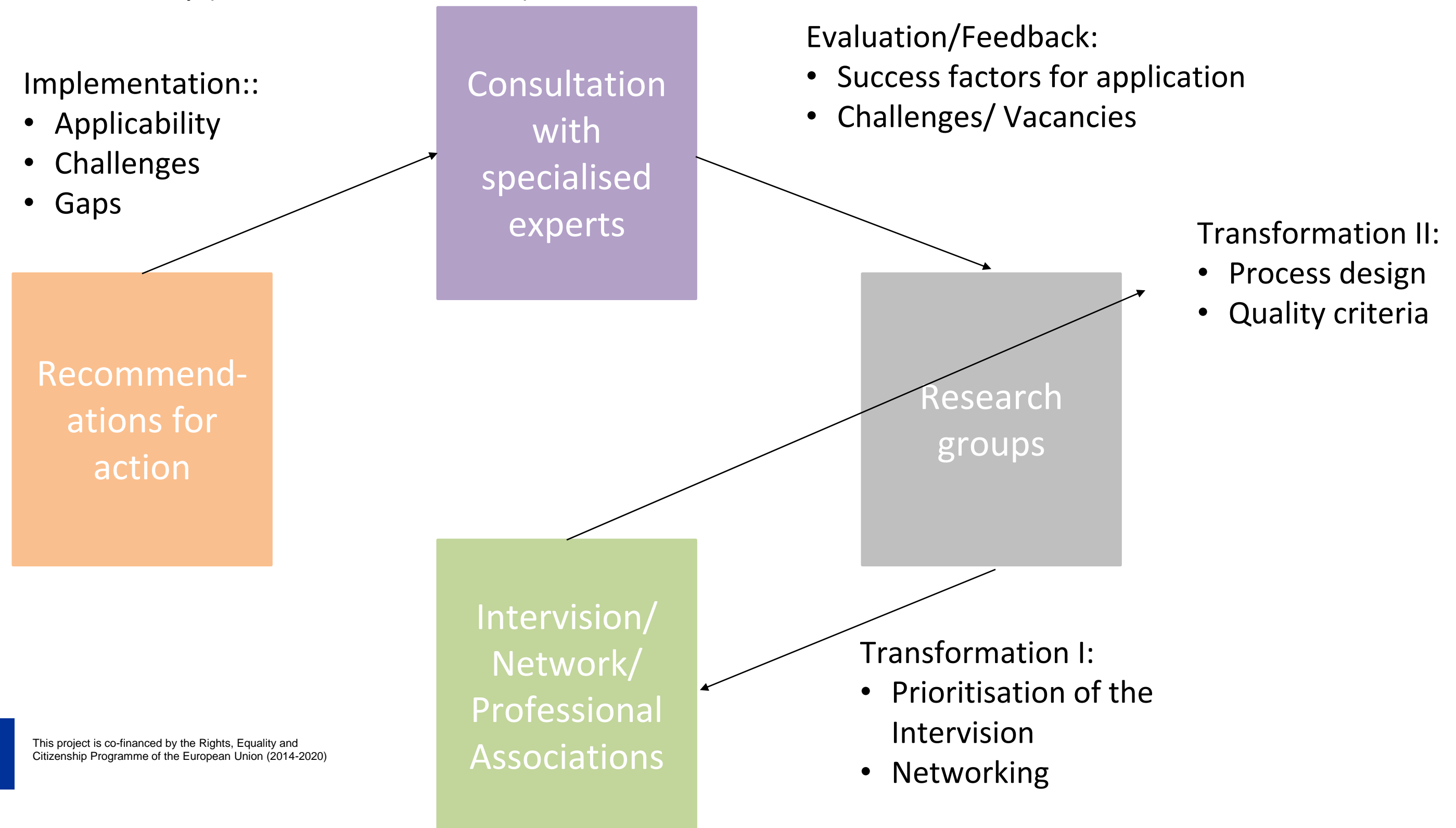
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How have we attempted to reach this goal??

Real world laboratory (Arnold & Piontek 2018)



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"[It] is becoming increasingly clear that the majority of consultations have connections to the subject of sexualised violence using digital media."

"How should you deal with preserving evidence of abuse images? How can a counselling centre navigate its legal rights in case when counselors are provided with evidence material?"

(Specialist counsellor)

Recommend-
ations for
action

Consultation
with
specialised
experts

"Evidence of abuse images [...] for the purpose of later supporting criminal proceedings by lawyers, child protection clinics or other specialised professionals is not necessarily safe from criminal liability, even if a data carrier has appropriate oversight and is kept in a safe place. If the public prosecutor's office or the police become aware of it, they are obliged to investigate." (QC)

Research
groups

"Legally secure structures must be created to provide affected persons more authority to decide when to report a crime. For this purpose, child protection clinics could be given a corresponding mandate which would allow abuse images to be retained under certain conditions for later use in court proceedings - oversight, backup exclusively on protected servers, compulsory transfer to law enforcement authorities after a certain period of time, or compulsory renewed counselling with those affected." (QC)

Intervision/
Network/
Professional
Associations

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"For me, the legally secure handling of evidence remains up for debate if those affected do not currently want to report their experiences." (specialist counsellor)



"Unfortunately, I have already experienced in practice that an erroneous assessment based on a psychological evaluation had to be accepted and that it had a decisive influence on the course of criminal proceedings or the awarding of custody." (specialised counsellor)

"With whom and how do we express presumptions about the scope of what is happening? How should we deal with professionals/police officers who trivialise the situation?" (specialist counsellor)



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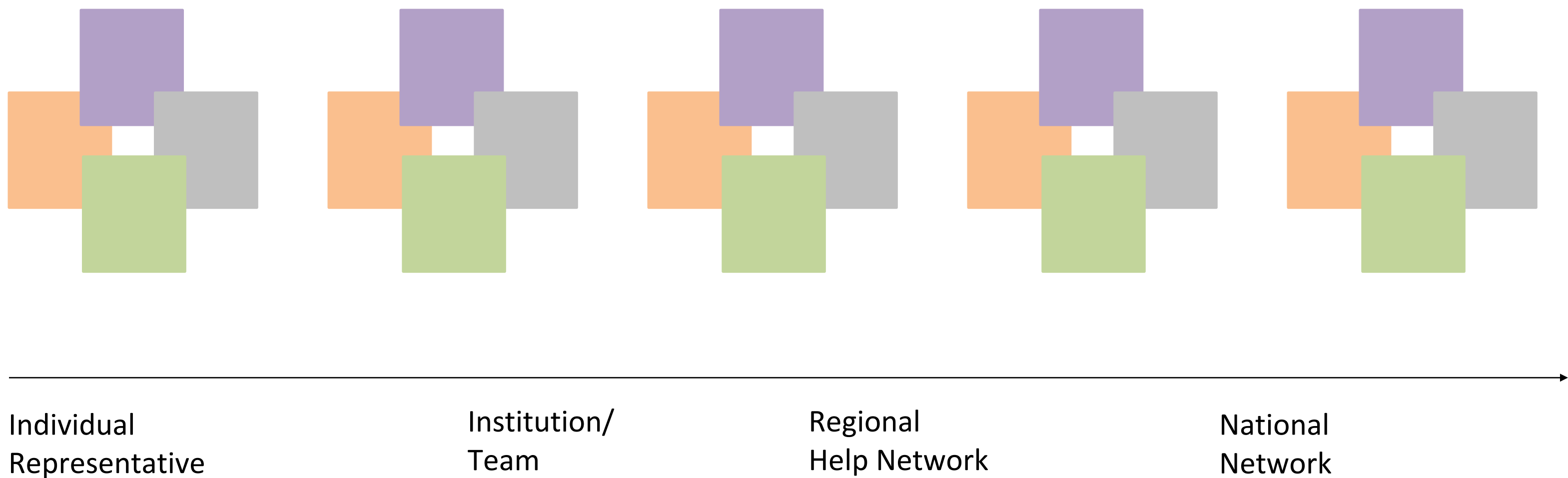


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„The case study “Magdalena” (Chapter 8) captured me the most, as it addresses the scope of digital violence, i.e. no physical escape. Even 800 km away and two years later, the events are catching up with those affected.” (specialist counsellor)

"Without question, deleting abuse images is a seemingly never-ending task, but it is extremely important for many of those affected, since the continued availability of abuse images on the Internet can be very stressful." (specialist counsellor)

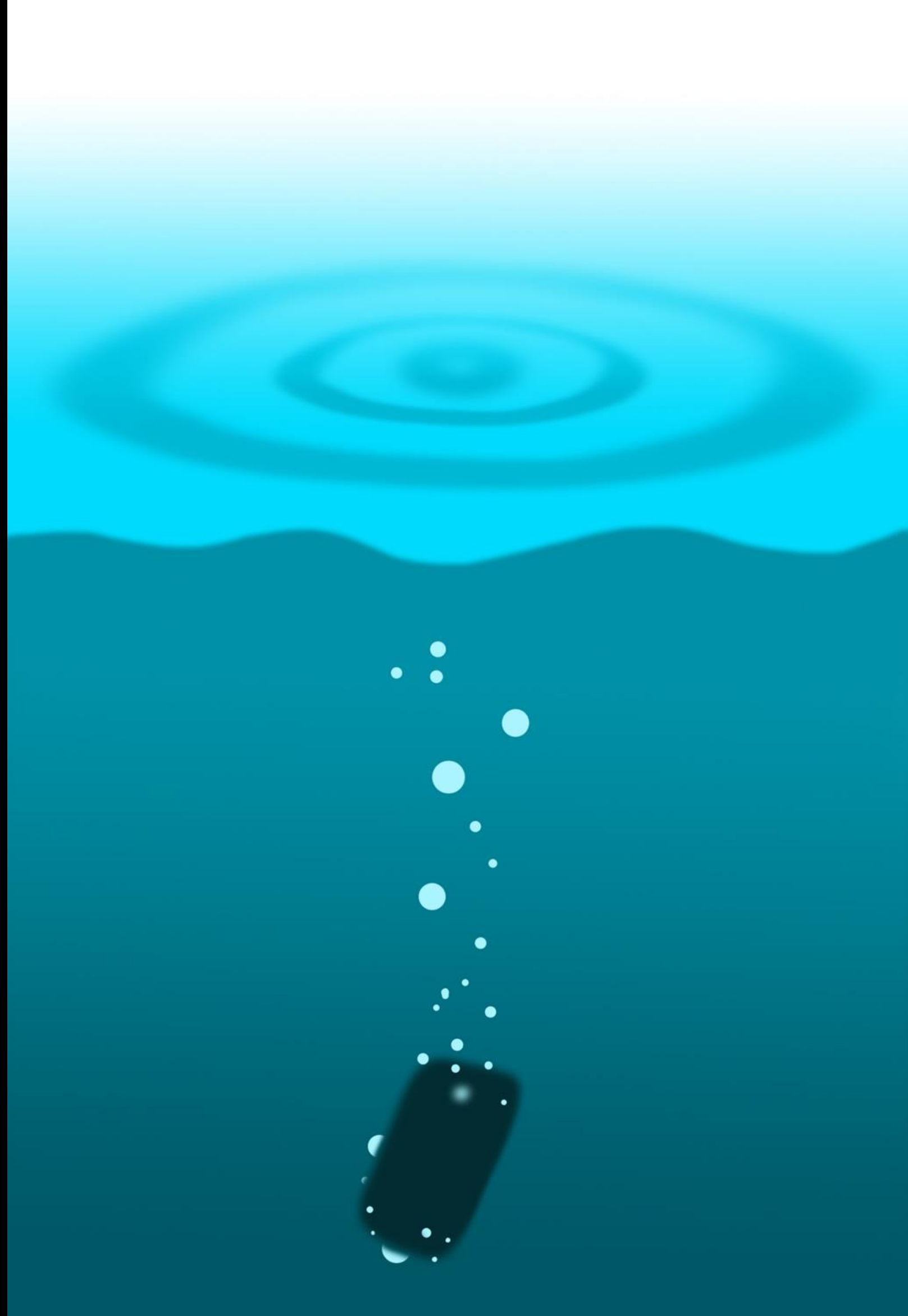
"I still experience uncertainty when considering consistent intervention options for supporting affected persons (e.g. deletion of images, preservation of evidence, whether or not to file a report?, etc.)" (specialised counsellor)



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"Professionally, I'm concerned about how to deal with violence that doesn't really stop, e.g. pictures keep popping up and being disseminated. How do I deal with the trauma if it never really ends?"
(specialised counsellor)



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The biopsychosocial protection of affected persons is the goal - not the prerequisite - of trauma-informed pedagogical interventions.



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The biopsychosocial protection of affected persons is the goal - not the prerequisite - of trauma-informed pedagogical interventions.

Safe spaces are relationships and support structures in which affected persons know they will experience solidarity, relief and active support in the event of re-victimisation and/or secondary victimisation.



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Protecting affected children and adolescents means:

- determining how they can feel protected in spite of the high probability of being pulled back into the violence
- determining how they can be prepared in case a worst case scenario come to pass
- helping them understand that they will once again be entitled to support services



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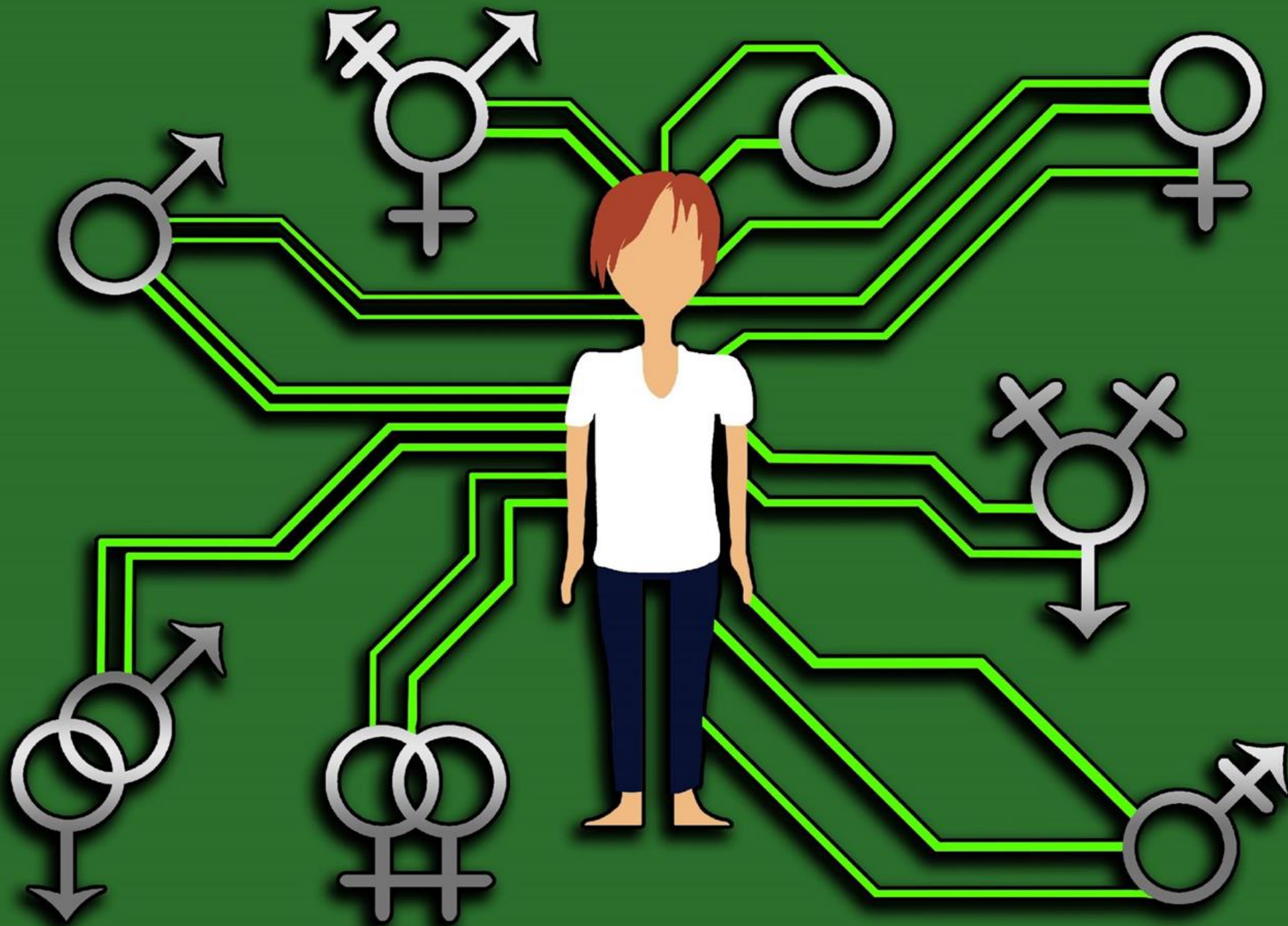
"I never cease to be amazed by the normality and scope of sending nude photos among peers. Where is the best place to start prevention? Or are we by default always in the midst of intervention?"

(specialised counsellor)



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The audience for prevention work is taught that consent is also a prerequisite for (sexual) communication when using digital media.



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The audience for prevention work is taught that consent is also a prerequisite for (sexual) communication when using digital media.

A preventative approach includes the following:

- accepting the sometimes positive role of digital media for young people, and
- a critical view of everyday sexism, constricting gender and body ideals, violent norms promoted by internet providers, algorithms, advertising, online challenges, influencers, and peer pressure.



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Prevention avoids sweeping bans on mediatised adolescent sexuality and raises awareness about perpetrator strategies.



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"I see the greatest challenges in the transfer of these professional standards [note: quality criteria] to the specialists that work with children and adolescents (schools, clubs, youth welfare office, etc.. also at the state and federal levels)."
(specialised counsellor)



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Which themes have we developed quality criteria for?

Quality Criteria for
Prevention

Quality Criteria for Dealing with Abuse
Images

Sexualised Violence Using
Digital Media:
Basic Knowledge & Approach

Quality Criteria for Developing
Coping Strategies

Quality Criteria for Working with
Young People who Violate Sexual
Boundaries



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Sexualised Violence Using Digital Media

Quality Criteria for Dealing with Images of Abuse

Quality Criteria for Dealing with Images of Abuse

Beyond Digital Violence (ByeDV)

The project ByeDV aims at developing quality criteria for the implementation of professional standards for dealing with sexualised violence using digital media committed against children and adolescents. The distinguishing feature of the project is the close collaboration between research and practice. Colleagues from counselling centres validate the usability of empirically developed recommendations for professionally dealing with sexualised violence with digital media.



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Three scenarios to consider.

Scenario 1:

A picture of a thirteen-year-old's penis circulates in a class group chat, and he is being made fun of as a result. You are not sure whether you should file a criminal complaint.

Scenario 2:

The mother of a five-year-old comes to your office hours. She found naked pictures on her partner's computer of her child splashing around. In the same file, she also found videos of other children engaging in sexual acts. The mother asks if you can store a backup copy of the file.

Scenario 3:

A teenager sends her underwear and nude photos of herself to multiple boys and men in exchange for gift certificates. The girl says she doesn't see any problem with this behaviour.

Over a two-year period, we discussed scenarios like these with a group of specialised practitioners. In these discussions, the following questions surfaced:

a) Under what circumstances must photographs and videos be interpreted as abuse images?

b) Which standards are factors for success when dealing professionally with abuse images?

Abuse images – sometimes also referred to as exploitative or abuse material – hurt, first and foremost, the individual depicted. They can lead to a completely unexpected disclosure of violence and exposure that is beyond the individual's control. Due to the potential circulation of abuse images, they can be the source of tension within one's social environment or lead to additional violence and accusations in one's peer group, at school or among family. Affected persons often experience denigration, so-called victim blaming, and a strong sense of powerlessness.

The quality criteria in this brochure present a conceptual exploration for support services when implementing institutional procedures for addressing abuse images. With this brochure, we assume that your institution already has a concept for protection measures when dealing with cases of sexualised violence against children and adolescents. As such, it aims to address all types of institutions that work with children and adolescents.

In the context of a threat assessment - by this we mean the initial evaluation by first responders, counselling services provided by specialised centres or agencies with a specialised range of services as well as clarifications to the risk of a child's well-being by the Youth Welfare Office - a possible risk of dissemination is addressed for the sake of transparency. This is done in consultation with the guardians, as long as doing so does not compromise the protection of the affected person.

Informing victims about a possible risk of dissemination only takes place when there are indications that abuse images may have been produced or disseminated. This takes into account the level of stress on those affected and the extent to which they have been stabilised. The aim of informing them about this possibility is to regain the ability to act against the risk of dissemination.

If you are interested in more in-depth information about informing affected persons about the possible risk of dissemination, see our

abstract collection with recommendations for professionals: Discussing (potential) dissemination of abuse images with victims and their families.

In the context of stabilisation, the affected person should never be led to believe that abuse images no longer exist or that a renewed confrontation with them can be ruled out so long as it is assumed or known that abuse images have been disseminated.

Affected persons should be prepared for how they can protect themselves in case of a renewed confrontation with the images, including information about the help options and legal rights they have, the technological and legal options for containment, how resilience can be built up preemptively and what aspects of psychoeducation can help.

You can find more on stabilising those affected in our brochure „Quality Criteria for Developing Coping Mechanisms“.

What should be taken into account when assessing the risk of harm, the examination of abuse images and the preservation of evidence?

The existence of abuse images indicates a violation of the sexual self-determination of young people and thus a threat to their well-being. In this respect, it may be tempting to use the style/method in which the images were created as the yardstick for the risk assessment. However, it is problematic to do a risk assessment based on an evaluation by anyone who is not an authorised specialist:

- Strictly speaking, every time an abuse image is viewed, it constitutes a renewed violation of the sexual self-determination of those depicted.
- The images themselves do not necessarily make the context of violence sufficiently comprehensible (e.g. scenario 1).

- An examination of abuse images is usually upsetting for the viewer.
- It must always be taken into account that the possession of abuse images may be punishable according to the criminal laws of the respective country; especially if it is so-called child pornographic content.

Risk assessments by counselling centres are not carried out by means of an examination of the abuse images themselves, but are based on impressions of relationships, power dependencies, further indications of violence or neglect, sexualised online communication, impressions of stress as well as the wants and needs of the young person.

The assessment is carried out in cooperation with several professionals, including specialised and/or experienced practitioners.

During counselling, practitioners must take into account that descriptions of and discussions about the abuse images that a person has been confronted with can be very upsetting and can reactivate traumatic memories.

The Quality Criteria will be available in German and English as free downloadable brochures on the ByeDV-Website (www.byedv.de / www.byedv.de/en) as of **April 30, 2023**.



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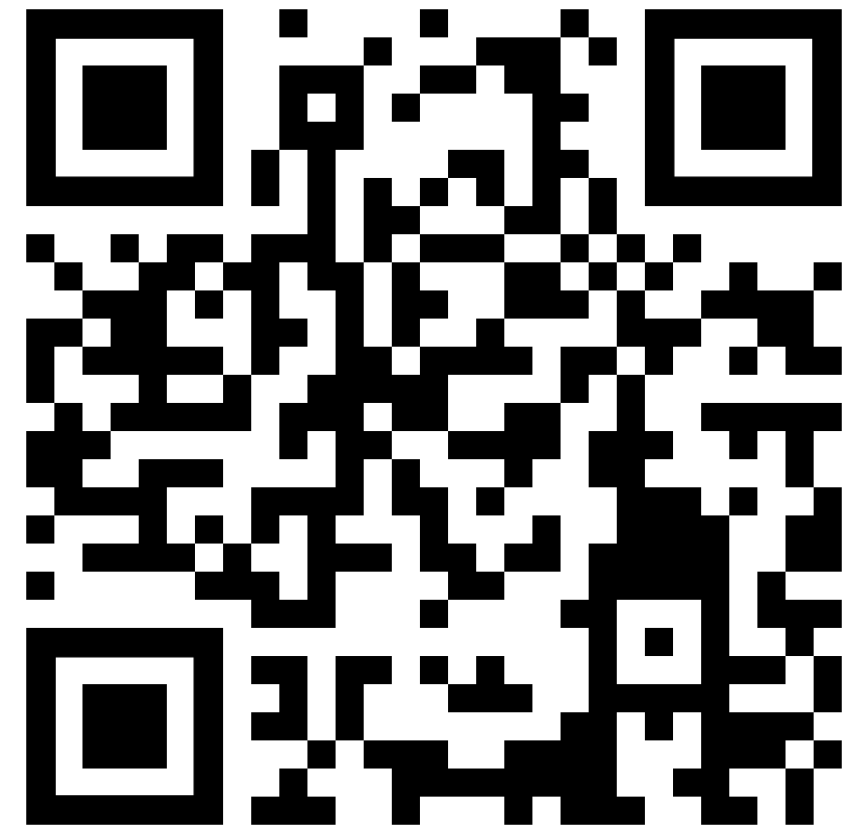
Download the Recommendations for Action (German)

<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-658-35764-1>



Collection of Abstracts coming soon
(English)

<https://bvedv.de/en/materialien-en/>



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Wildwasser
Marburg e.V.

**Fachberatungsstelle
zu sexualisierter Gewalt in Kindheit und Jugend**



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Männerbüro
Hannover



Beratungsstelle
Anstoß





Der Kinderschutzbund
Ortsverband
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**DIE
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Thank You!

Katharina Kärgel

katharina.kaergel@srh.de

Frederic Vobbe

frederic.vobbe@srh.de

www.byedv.de

www.human-srh.de



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