



**Knowledge hub**  
-  
**Collection of best practices**

**Summary of the best practice**

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) \*

KiVa antibullying program

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented \*

Finland, Belgium, Chile, Estonia, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Northern Spain/Basque Country, Spain, Argentina and Mexico, Sweden, the Netherlands, The United Kingdom, The European School network in Belgium, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain, and Germany

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to \*

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) \*

University of Turku, Finland / International partners, see <https://www.kivaprogram.net/kiva-around-the-world/>

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. \*

Bullying prevention; Bullying intervention; Basic education; School-based program; Elementary school; Middle school; Universal actions; Indicated actions; Monitoring tools; Empowering bystanders

6. What makes it a best practice? \*

KiVa antibullying program is the most widely used and most thoroughly researched bullying prevention program in the world. It has been found to be feasible, possible to roll-out in a large scale (even nationwide in Finland), sustainable, effective, and cost-effective. The effects have been found in several randomized controlled trials, both in Finland and in other countries. After the wide roll-out of the program in Finland in 2009, the prevalence of students bullying others and those bullied by others have been decreasing steadily, according to several independent large-scale surveys.

## Description of the best practice

### 7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? \*

In 2006, the Finnish Ministry of Education mandated bullying experts from the University of Turku to develop a bullying prevention program for Finnish elementary and middle schools. The population affected were children in basic education, with 6 to 15 year of ages, but also their families and their teachers at school. The aim was to reduce the prevalence of bullying in schools and associated negative effects, and provide teachers with concrete schools for their anti-bullying work. The KiVa program became one of the best known anti-bullying programs in the world. It was stringently evaluated and proven to reduce bullying (along with many other positive effects, see responses below).

KiVa program includes universal actions (for prevention, targeted at all students) and indicated actions (for intervention, targeted at student who have been directly involved as bullies or as victims) as well as tools to monitor the situation in the school, as well as trends over time. It also involves a virtual mailbox, through which students can send messages to their school's KiVa team if they have seen someone being bullied or have experienced bullying themselves. The program is supposed to be systematically implemented, with a larger "dose" in grade levels 1, 4, and 7.

In the preventative universal actions, the key aim is to affect all students so that they would respond constructively when witnessing bullying (supporting peers who are vulnerable and victimized) rather than reinforce the behavior of the students who bully. KiVa seeks to raise awareness that everyone is responsible for the safety and well-being of their fellow students, and that the group can put an end to bullying together.

## 8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation?

\*

The principals, teachers, school social workers, school psychologists, and other adults working at school implement the program in schools. KiVa is not meant to be a "project" with a start and end date, but rather become a permanent part of the school's antibullying work.

KiVa antibullying program was first developed and evaluated in 2006-2008 and was launched nationwide in Finland 2009. Since 2013 it has been implemented in other countries as well, via licensed partners. Twice a year new certified KiVa trainers are trained in Turku. These trainers will then train and support schools in their countries/regions. Our partners include civil sector organizations, private companies, university spin-offs, and ministries. The licensed partners distribute the program, and the costs for the schools vary (depending on support from foundations, ministries, etc.). The next goal is to develop a low-cost "basic" version of KiVa for developing countries.

## 9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? \*

i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);

Since 2003, it has been mandatory for education providers in Finland to create an action plan for bullying prevention and intervention and to implement this plan. In 2009, when KiVa program became available for all elementary and middle schools in Finland, schools finally got evidence-based guidance and concrete tools for this work. The program has had enormous impact on how schools in Finland (and later on, in other countries) prevent bullying and respond to it. Also monitoring the school's situation with respect to school safety, school climate, student perceptions of equal treatment, student perceptions of teacher's bullying-related attitude, and the prevalence of students bullying others and /or being bullied by others has become possible through the annual KiVa student surveys providing tailored feedback for each school implementing the program. Research (Ahtola et al., 2021) has shown that KiVa has not only changed students' attitudes and behaviors, but also the way teachers think about bullying and how efficacious they feel regarding its prevention and intervention.

ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?

More than 15 empirical publications are reporting positive effects of the KiVa program. The effects include significant reductions in multiple forms of victimization (ranging from -21% to -63% already during the first year of implementation), as well as numerous positive outcomes related to well-being, school liking, academic motivation, empathy, anti-bullying attitudes, and constructive bystander behaviors. From among those bullied students whose case was tackled by their school's KiVa team, 98% felt that their situation improved. All these results were found in a stringent randomized controlled trial involving more than 30 000 students. The effects of KiVa have been studied in Finland, but also in several other countries (eg., Italy, the Netherlands). In addition, there have been at least three international cost-effectiveness studies (e.g., Huitsing et al., 2020; Persson et al., 2018) showing that economically, the benefits of KiVa outweigh its costs, proving KiVa economically sustainable.

KiVa has been awarded nationally, as well as internationally. It won the European Crime Prevention Award in 2009 (European Crime Prevention Network) and the Social Policy Award for Best Article, 2012 (Society for Research on Adolescence, USA).

After its nationwide roll-out in Finland, KiVa became a sought-after program: in 2016, 92% of the Finnish schools providing comprehensive education were registered as KiVa schools.

iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results?

See the above answer

## 10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? \*

i) What were the key triggers for transformation?

The Finnish Ministry of Education of that time (2006) was worried about the low level of school well-being reported by Finnish youth. Bullying had been a topic in societal discussion and political agenda since early 1990's. In 2006, The Ministry mandated Prof. Salmivalli's group to develop a bullying prevention program that could be used widely in Finnish schools.

ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?

The materials developed were versatile, including teacher manuals with curriculum contents, video games for students, monitoring tools, activities, short films, material for parents, etc. The developers' wide knowledge on the phenomenon of bullying, decades of research on the topic, and their earlier intervention trials – overall, a good understanding of what works best in bullying prevention and intervention – facilitated the development of the program.

iii) What did not work – why did it not work?

Almost 13 years after the roll-out of KiVa in Finland, we know that implementation varies between schools, and in some schools it has ceased over time. We collect data on implementation every year (annual staff surveys) and also report back to schools how they are doing with the implementation. It would be important to have resources to support implementation and organize training days regularly for schools implementing evidence-based programs such as KiVa.

## 11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a "best practice".

What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented "best practice" or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? \*

KiVa antibullying program is evidence-based. It has been found to be feasible, possible to roll-out in a large scale (even nationwide in Finland), sustainable, effective, and cost-effective. The effects have been found in several randomized controlled trials, both in Finland and in other countries. After the wide roll-out of the program in Finland in 2009, the prevalence of students bullying others and those bullied by others have been decreasing steadily, according to several independent large-scale surveys. We welcome new partners in our growing network [www.kivaprogram.net](http://www.kivaprogram.net)

## 12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. \*

- Kärnä, A., Voeten, M., Little, T., Poskiparta, E., Kaljonen, A., & Salmivalli, C. (2011). A large-scale evaluation of the KiVa anti-bullying program: Grades 4-6. *Child Development*, 82, 311-330. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21291444/>
- Salmivalli, C., Kärnä, A., & Poskiparta, E. (2011) Counteracting bullying in Finland: The KiVa program and its effects on different forms of being bullied. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 35, 405-411. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0165025411407457>
- Kärnä, A., Voeten, M., Little, T., Poskiparta, E., Alanen, E., & Salmivalli, C. (2011). Going to Scale: A nonrandomized nationwide trial of the KiVa antibullying program for comprehensive schools. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 79, 796-805. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21967491/>
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- Ahtola, A., Haataja, A., Kärnä, A., Poskiparta, E., & Salmivalli, C. (2012). For children only? Effects of the KiVa antibullying program on teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 28, 851-859. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2012-14913-008>
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- Salmivalli, C., Poskiparta, E., Ahtola, A., & Haataja, A. (2013). The Implementation and Effectiveness of the KiVa Antibullying Program in Finland. *European Psychologist*, 18, 79-88. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2013-21900-002>
- Williford, A., Elledge, L., Boulton, A., DePaolis, K., Little, T., & Salmivalli, C. (2013). Effects of the KiVa antibullying program on cyberbullying and cybervictimization frequency among Finnish youth. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*, 42, 820-833. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23659182/>
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- Saarento, S., Boulton, A., & Salmivalli, C. (2015). Reducing bullying and victimization: Student- and classroom-level mechanisms of change. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 43, 61-76. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24390403/>
- Yang, A., & Salmivalli, C. (2015) Effectiveness of the KiVa antibullying program on bully-victims, bullies, and victims. *Educational Research*, 57, 80-90. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2014-57589-005>
- Juvonen, J. Schacter, H., Sainio, M. & Salmivalli, C. (2016). Can a school-wide bullying prevention program improve the plight of victims?: Evidence for risk X intervention effects. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 84, 334-344. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26795935/>
- Garandeau, C., Vartio, A., Poskiparta, E., & Salmivalli, C. (2016). School bullies' intention to change behavior following adult interventions: Effects of empathy arousal, condemning of bullying, and blaming of the perpetrator. *Prevention Science*, 17, 1034-1043. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27696275/>
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