

## Presentation from the French team in Boden Sweden

### Let's Focus on gender

#### **Laws**

#### **INTRODUCTION (slides 1 and 2)**

First we are going to explain why we have chosen the topic of education :

School is a microcosm which mixes kids from all kinds of backgrounds.

Everything we learn at school shapes our future and our personality, especially since in France we spend a lot of time at school from a very early age. Even though school is not compulsory until the age of 6, most French kids go to school at 3. It's not kindergarden, it's a real school with teachers who have the same degree as primary school teachers. In French high schools, we are at school from 8 to 6. So we think that what we are as adults depends a lot on what we learn at school and fighting gender stereotypes starts at school.

**BEFORE 2013 (slide 3)**, a big survey was conducted to assess gender equality in schools and the result shows that there is a gender gap.

From an early age, girls are expected not to be good at sciences and they aren't encouraged to play games that develop their rational skills.

On the other hand, boys are not supposed to be as creative as girls and they are not encouraged to play with dolls and care for the others.

That's why, even though they do better at school than boys, girls shy away from scientific studies and even if they do medical studies they will rather be nurses than doctors.

On the other hand, boys are reluctant to choose the humanities. (Lycée CDG, 5 boys only out of 45 students who study the humanities)

The result is that there are not enough girls who become engineers, for instance, although there are a lot of engineer's jobs available.

Besides, we need excellence in science, which girls can bring! :)

So the idea was to think of a way to close the gap between genders in education by fighting against gender stereotypes and by making the girls more confident because they have as many chances as boys to succeed in maths and science.

**So in July 2013 (slides 4 and 5)**, NVB who was at the time Minister for Women's Rights decided to set up a series of measures named “Les ABCD de l'égalité”. The idea was to focus on small kids from “maternelle” to primary school to make sure that kids grow up without prejudice against the other gender. Boys and girls were to be encouraged to play the same games, to practice the same sports.

New literature for kids in particular was seen as a very powerful tool to promote gender equality. We are going to show you an example.

This is a book for 3-4 year-old kids entitled “Mademoiselle Zazie a-t-elle un zizi?” which means “Does miss Zazie have a zizi?” Zizi is a childish word for penis in French. For the boy in the story, the world is divided into 2 groups: those who have a penis and those who don't. The first group is composed of those who are good at sports, and strong and who can climb trees whereas in the second group you find creatures with long hair who cry and play with dolls. But one day miss Zazie arrives at the school and she is good at football and she can climb trees. She can do everything the “avec zizi” can do, even better. So the boy wants to check if she is in the right group and if she has or not a “zizi”.

This is the kind of story that conveys the idea that girls have the same skills as boys and there are no predefined gender roles.

### **Reactions against the law (slide 6)**

In reaction to this law, some people stood up in arms.

In 2013 the law allowing homosexual marriage had been passed and there had been quite a lot of demonstrations by groups called “manif pour tous”, mostly Catholic people.

So the same people opposed the “ABCD de l'égalité”, claiming that it was promoting the gender theory. This theory explains that there is no predefined gender and the kids can choose which gender they want to be as they grow up (of course, the "ABCD de l'égalité" did not promote the gender theory).

The people from "La manif pour tous" argued that this would jeopardize our society based on heterosexual families, the same way gay marriage endangers society.

They even called on parents to take their kids away from school for one day to protest.

Later, some parents decided to take their kids away from state schools to send them to private schools.

On top of that since the law came from the Ministry of Women's Rights and not directly from the Ministry of Education, it was seen as a feminist conspiracy.

### **Overhaul of the law (slide 7)**

In June 2014, the Minister of Education, Benoît Hamon, took over the project and decided to get rid of the contentious aspects to make it less constraining.

So today, what remains of the "ABCD de l'égalité" is a lot of resources available to the teachers, for instance workshops, classroom activities, stories to promote gender equality but there is no longer any obligation for the teachers to implement those activities.

### **Conclusion (slide 8)**

To conclude, politicians are aware that there is a gender gap, that change is needed and will take place through school and education, however there is still a lot of reluctance in France about any kind of change. Laws are proposed but the main issue is to change the mentalities.

As for us, we are lucky to be in a tolerant high school - where there are almost twice as many girls as boys, where boys are a minority (even in the Erasmus project) and where it's girls' power!

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