

APPEARANCE-RELATED ACTIVISM IN EUROPE: WHAT ARE WE DOING TO CHANGE THE CULTURE?

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TASK GROUP 3: SOCIAL ACTIVISM

- Collect information on appearance-related activism in Europe between the years 2010 and 2015
- Inform activists, researchers, health professionals and the general public on what is being done in terms of appearance-related activism, how activists can learn from each other, collaborate, and join forces to make better use of their expertise, reach and resources.
- Strengthen appearance-related activism in Europe and create a network that can aid and empower European activist efforts for years to come.

HOW DID WE DEFINE ACTIVISM?

- Specific, deliberate actions generated by a person or a group of people for the purpose of changing sociocultural values, ideals, and norms regarding appearance, promoting respect for diversity in appearance, and challenging discrimination, prejudice and stigma related to appearance. This did not include advocacy for access to services, legal advice, social support or self-help activities.

HOW DID WE DEFINE APPEARANCE?

- Physical appearance - including weight, visible difference and appearance alterations (i.e. photoshopping and cosmetic surgery)
- Excluding race/ethnicity, religion, clothing, gender identity and functional disabilities.

WHAT DOES APPEARANCE-RELATED ACTIVISM IN EUROPE LOOK LIKE?

- Main aims: What was the purpose of the effort?
- Means used: What kind of activism was it?
- Target group: Who is it for?
- Time frame: When did it take place?
- Duration: How long did it last?
- Impact: Did it change anything? Was it evaluated?

COLLABORATING PARTNERS

- Michaela Langer - Austria
- Alona Rauckiene - Lithuania
- Liesbet Boone - Belgium
- Youri Anastassov - Bulgaria
- Triin Jagomägi - Estonia
- Gareth Davies - France
- Maria Zafiri - Greece
- Amanda Fitzgerald - Ireland
- Joanne Cassar - Malta
- Dian De Vries - Netherlands
- José Mendes - Portugal
- Almudena García Manso - Spain
- Nichola Rumsey – UK

THANK
YOU

A watercolor illustration featuring the words "THANK YOU" in a black, serif, all-caps font. The text is arranged in two lines, with "THANK" on top and "YOU" below it. The words are surrounded by several autumn-themed elements: red and pink leaves with white vein patterns, and small clusters of green berries. The leaves are scattered around the text, some overlapping it. The berries are small, round, and green, with a few leaves also having small green berries. The overall style is soft and artistic, with a focus on natural, seasonal motifs.

PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

- | | |
|------------|--------------------|
| 1. Austria | 9. Ireland |
| 2. Belgium | 10. Italy |
| 3. Estonia | 11. Lithuania |
| 4. France | 12. Netherlands |
| 5. Germany | 13. Portugal |
| 6. Greece | 14. Spain |
| 7. Hungary | 15. Switzerland |
| 8. Iceland | 16. United Kingdom |

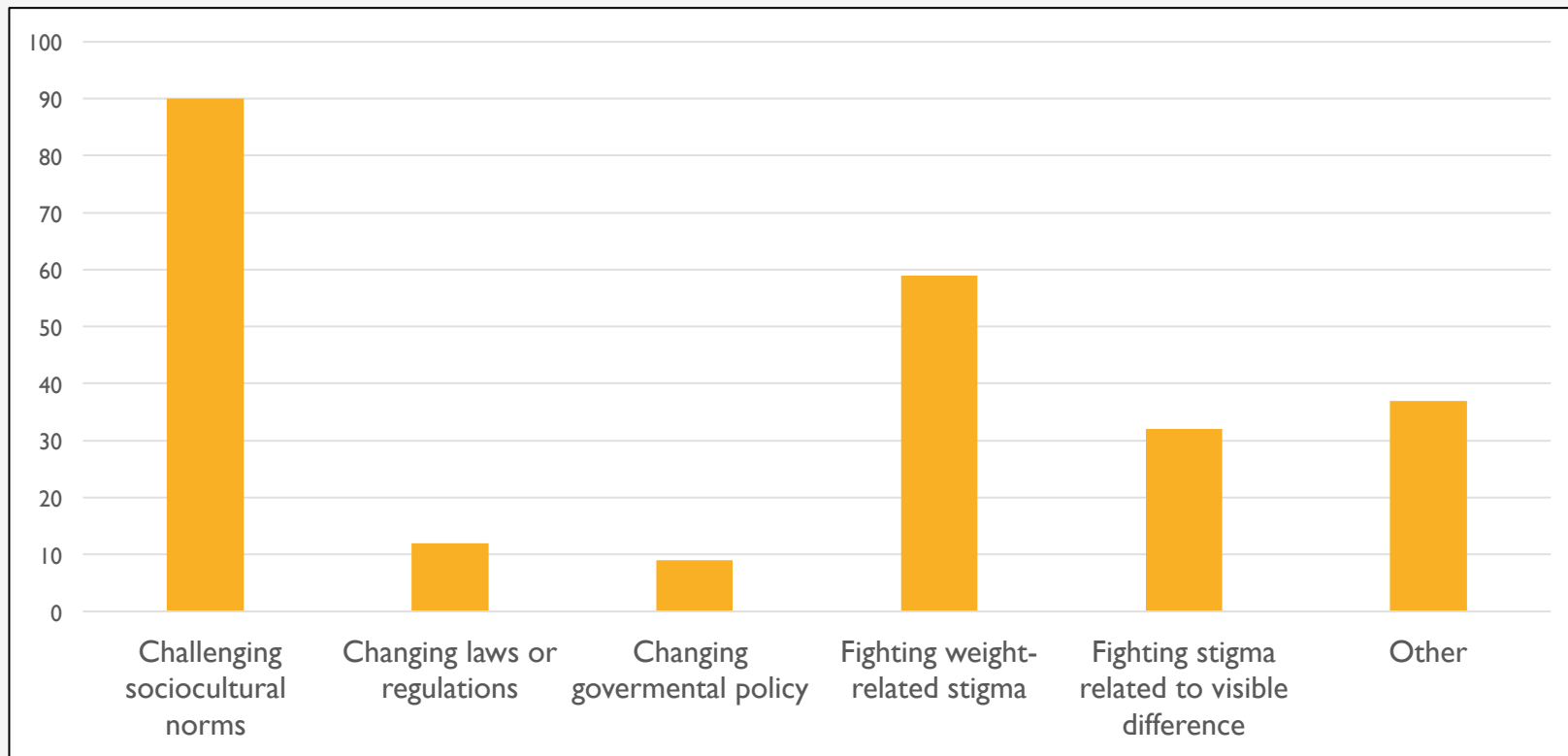
MAIN RESULTS

- Various forms of activism, e.g. public events, programs, campaigns, or other activist efforts, but be confined to efforts aimed at changing sociocultural views regarding appearance and challenging stigma related to appearance.
- 140 activist efforts from 16 countries identified
 - 29 omitted for not meeting criteria
- Half (76 efforts or 54%) had some indicator of success
- 5 (3.6%) reported scientific evaluation – no confirmed publication

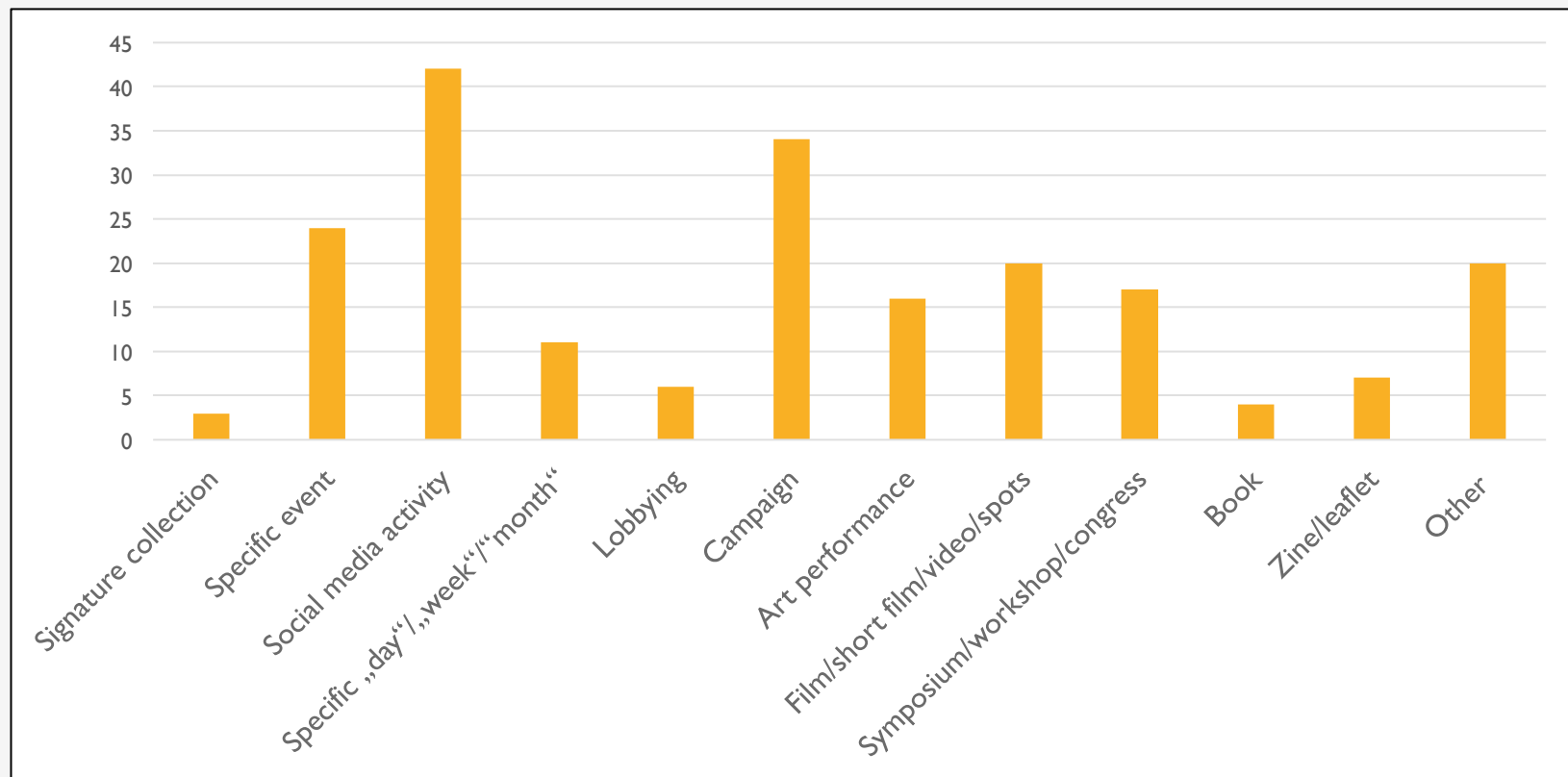
NUMBER OF EFFORTS IDENTIFIED

- Austria = 13
- Belgium = 1
- Estonia = 1
- France = 5
- Germany = 6
- Greece = 1
- Hungary = 18
- Iceland = 19
- Ireland = 11
- Italy = 12
- Lithuania = 4
- Netherlands = 5
- Portugal = 4
- Spain = 12
- Switzerland = 8
- United Kingdom = 20

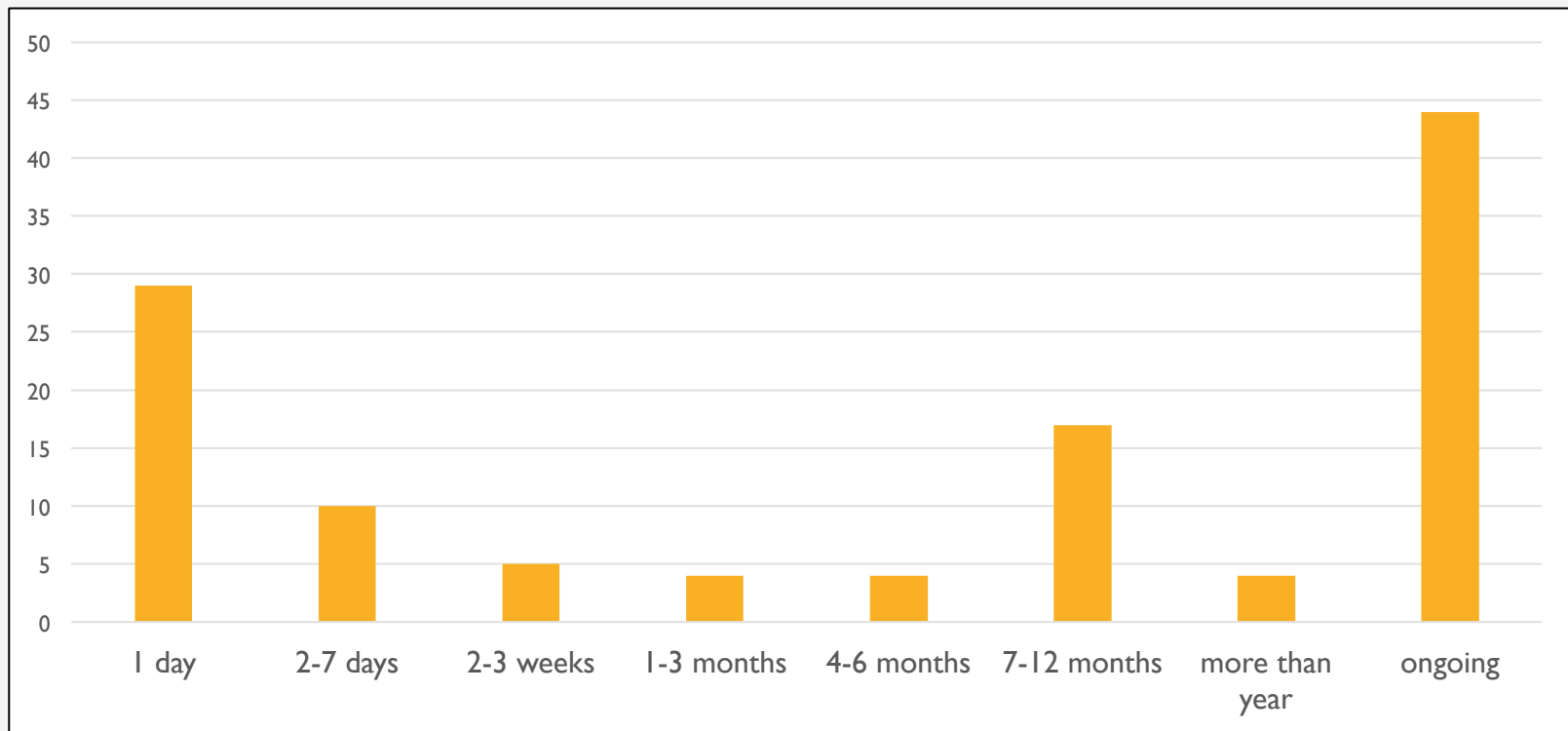
MAIN AIMS



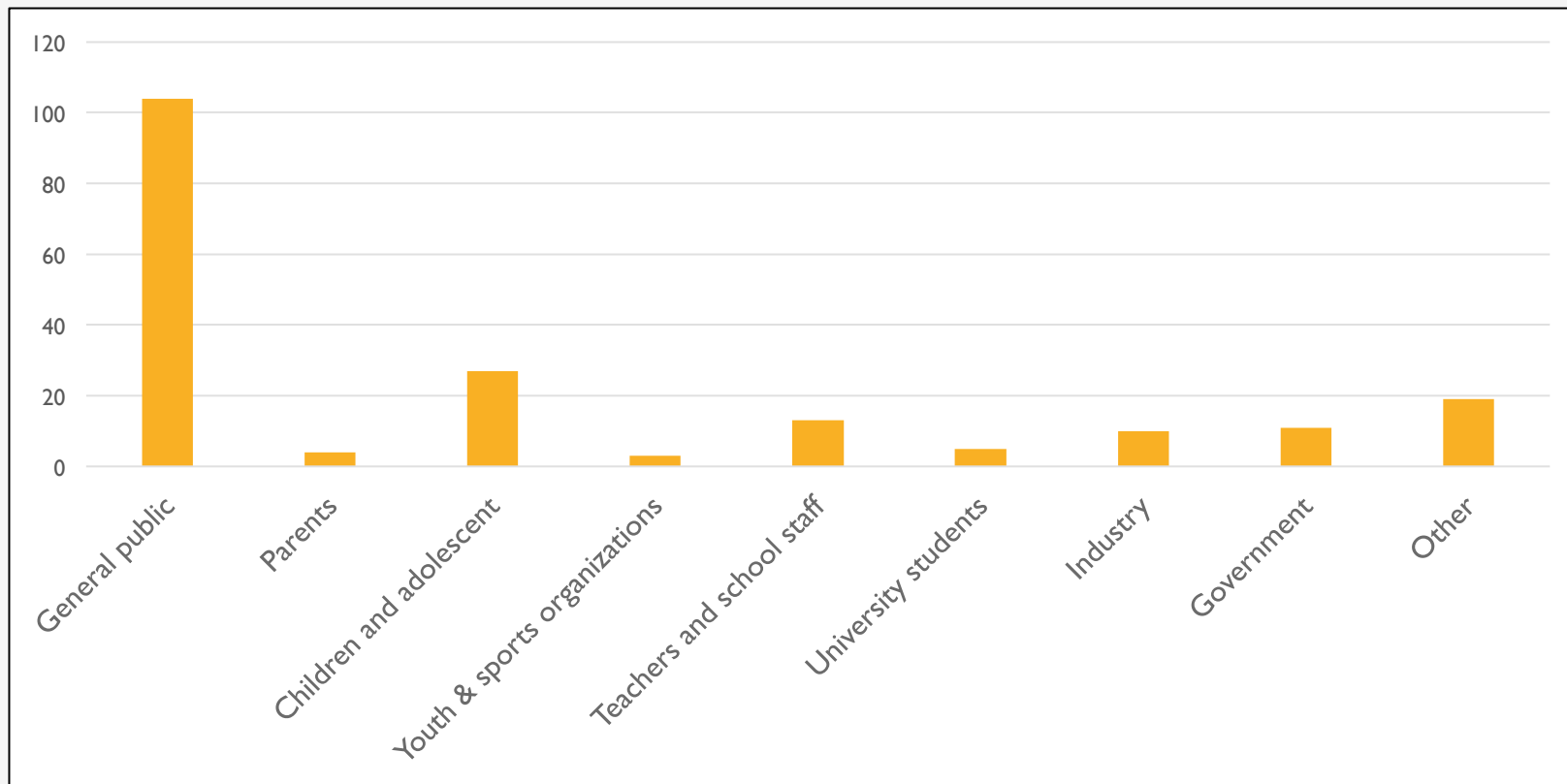
MEANS USED



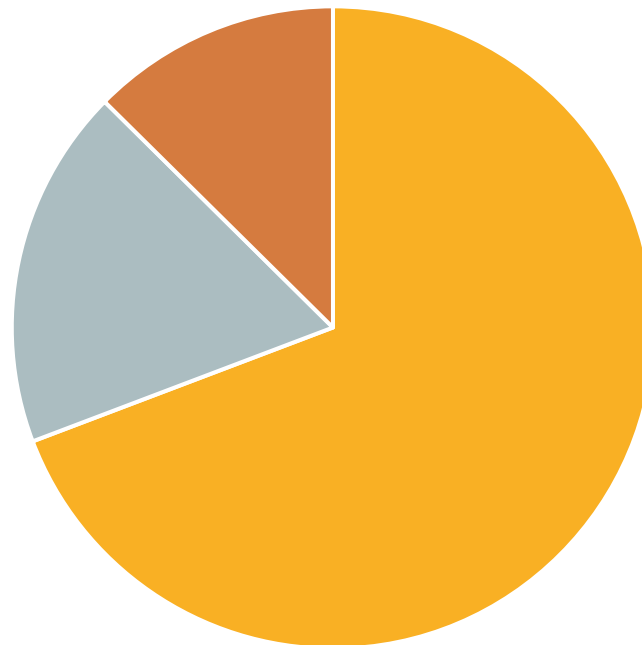
DURATION



TARGET GROUP

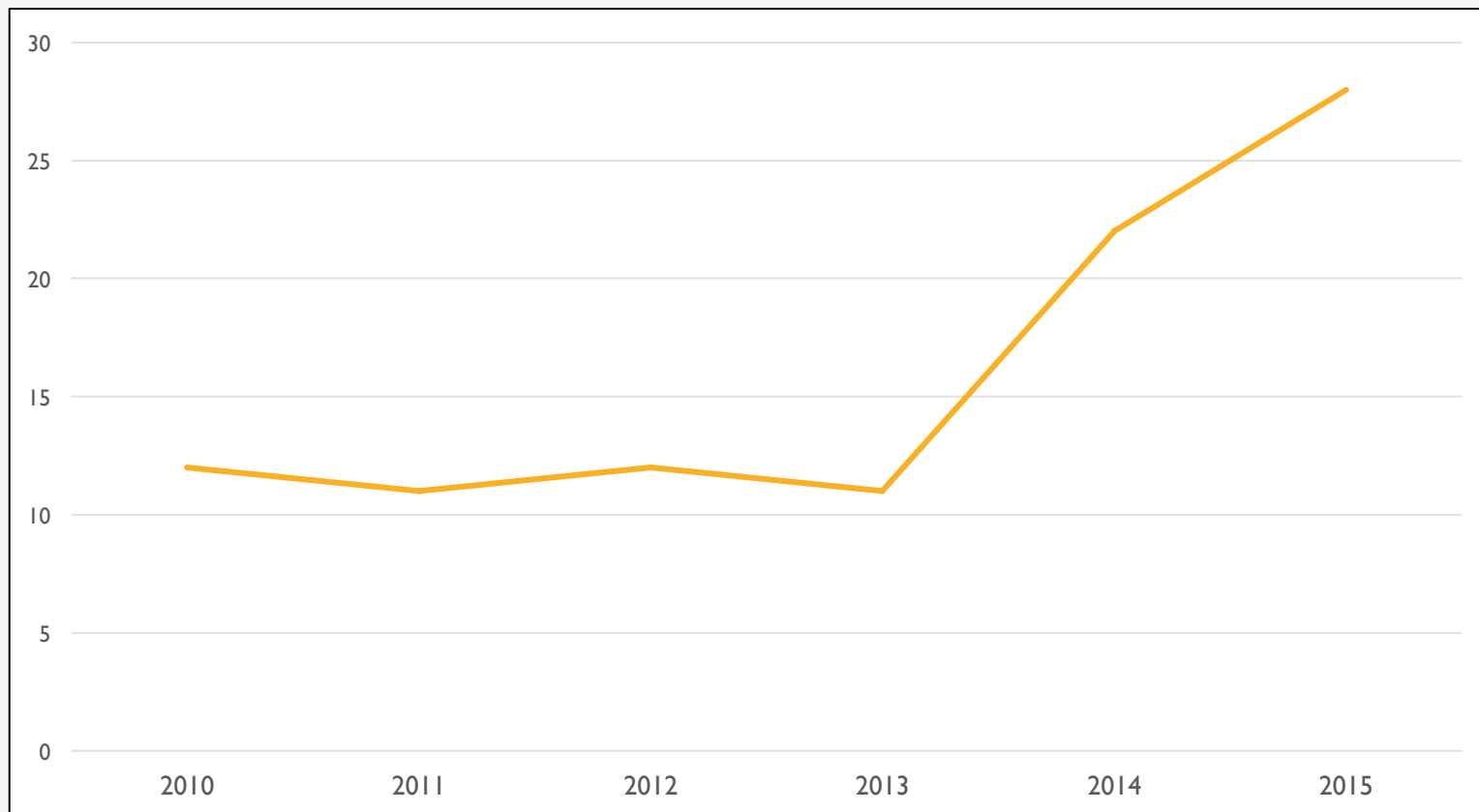


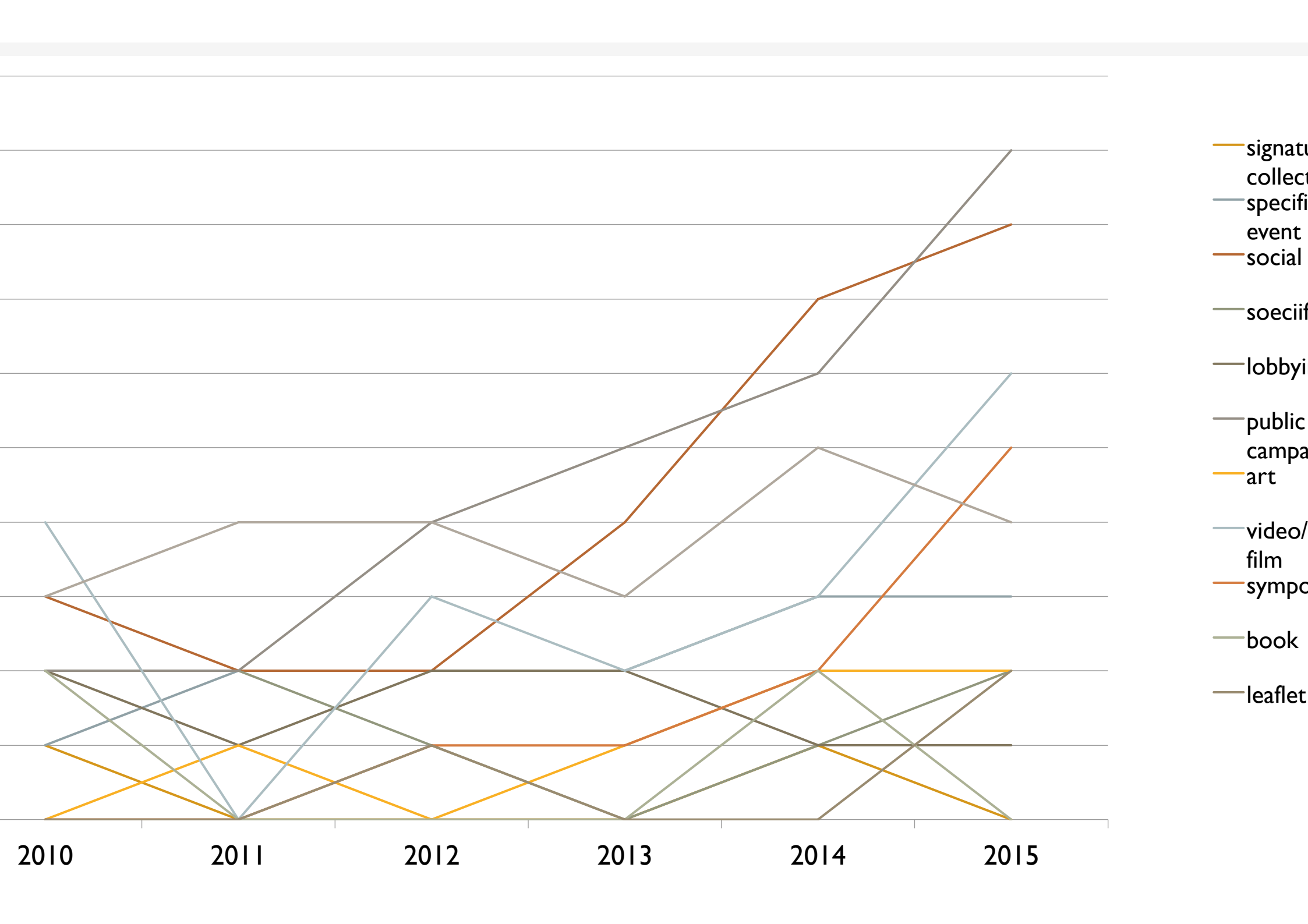
TARGET AREA



■ National ■ Regional ■ Local

NUMBER OF ACTIVIST EFFORTS PER YEAR

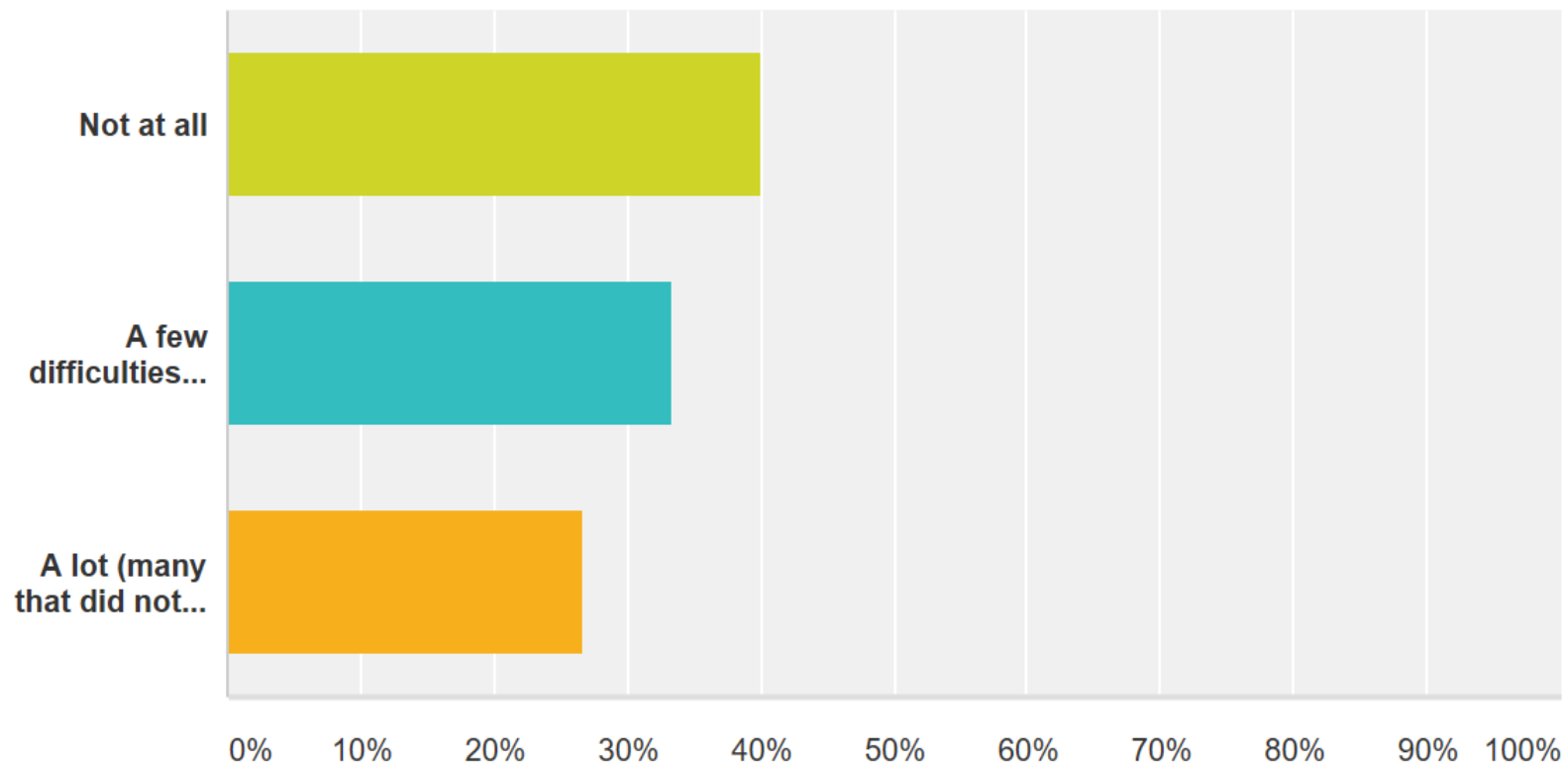




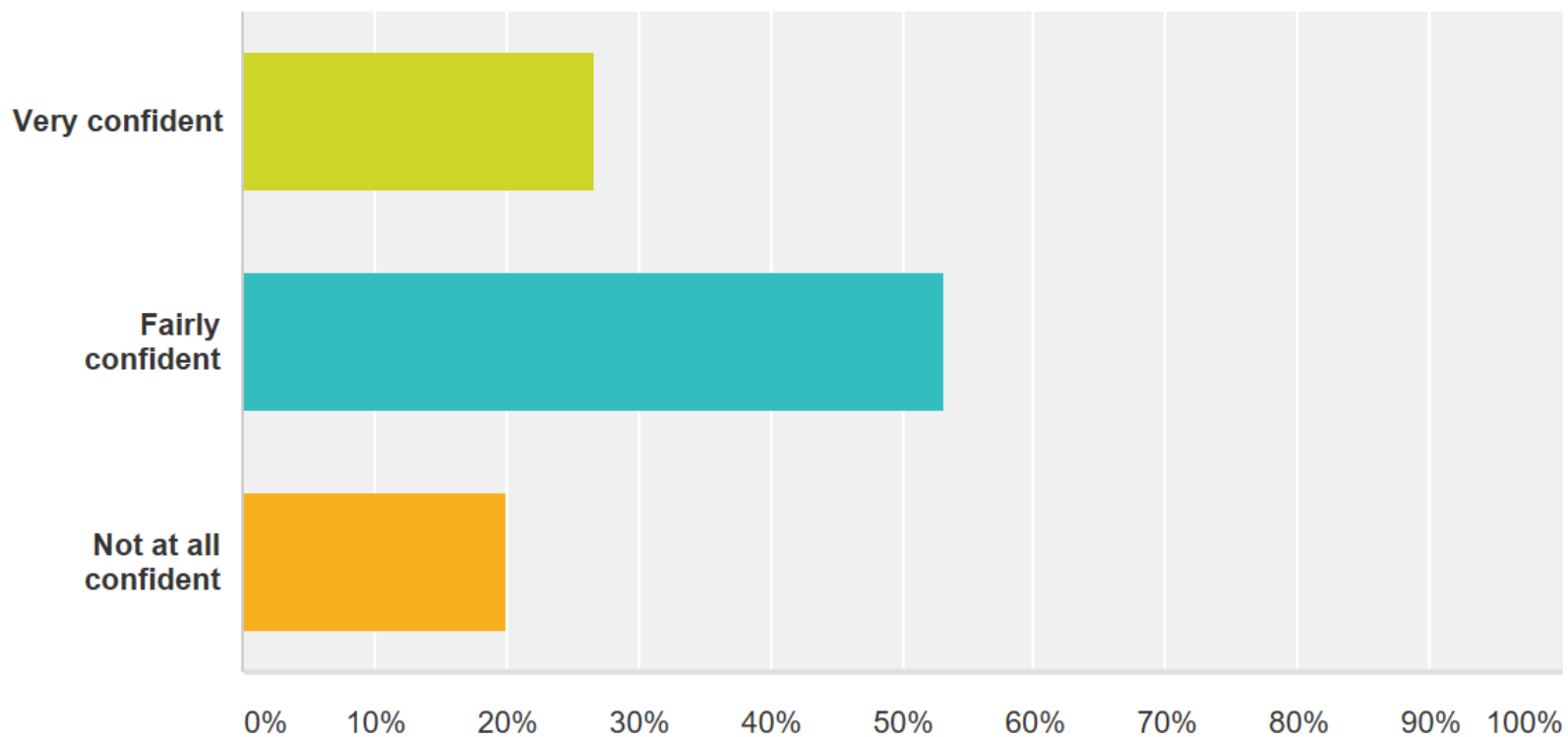
WHAT MEANS WERE USED TO COLLECT INFORMATION ON ACTIVIST EFFORTS?

- 94% performed internet searches
- 81% contacted eating disorder professionals
- 63% contacted professionals working with cleft palate
- 56% contacted eating disorders organizations in their country
- 56% contacted size-acceptance organizations
- 50% contacted cleft palate organizations
- 44% contacted visible difference organizations
- 44% contacted professionals working with visible difference
- 44% other that were not mentioned (e.g., body image experts, government departments, university students' unions, health promotion professionals)

**DID YOU HAVE DIFFICULTIES GETTING
RESPONSES FROM THE PEOPLE OR GROUPS
YOU TRIED TO CONTACT?**



HOW CONFIDENT DO YOU FEEL THAT THE INFORMATION
YOU COLLECTED REFLECTS THE ACTUAL SCOPE OF
APPEARANCE-RELATED ACTIVISM THAT TOOK PLACE IN
YOUR COUNTRY DURING THE TIME FRAME IN QUESTION?



EXAMPLES

- Campaign to include weight as a protected category in Iceland's constitution
- Competition by the Vienna Women's Health Programme (2011) "We like everybody: Our school without thinness obsession". Pupils developed an advertising and PR campaign for their school that promoted a positive attitude to appearance and weight
- “Wij zijn allemaal OK” (We are all OK) – Belgian flashmob where 4 volunteers undressed, spreading the message that you should have respect for your own body. People passing by were asked to put their name on the body's of the volunteers

EXAMPLES

- France's law on minimum BMI among fashion models
- GORDOFOBIA – Spanish short documentary exploring aesthetics, stereotypes and discrimination in relation to body size
- “International Psoriasis day - Swimmers night” - famous sports people swim with psoriasis patients and other civilians in four of the biggest cities in Hungary in order to fight against stigma and prejudice related to psoriasis
- Adolescent students in South Tyrol (Italy) became mannequins in the shop window of a fashion store for one afternoon to show locals that fashion is beautiful on bodies of different shapes and heights

„BEAUTY BEGINS WITH YOU“
ITALY 2013: SCHOOL COMPETITIONS AMONG 14-19 YR OLDS





HRAUSTJR LÍKAMAR ERU af ÖLLUM STÆRÐUM & gerðum
Opnum augun – storkum staðalmyndum



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PER UNA BELLEZA SMISURATA

ITALY 2009-2011: 4 TOWNS, 4 SCHOOLS, 4 SHOPS



PER UNA BELLEZZA SMISURATA (FOR AN IMMEASURABLE BEAUTY)

- Survey among 200 young people in schools:
 - 73% had heard about the initiative
 - 97% said it made them think about the pressure about their appearance
 - 85% said they were more critical when looking at fashion magazines, posters or shop windows
 - 46% said they were less critical when looking at their mirror image
 - 15% said they were not trying to look thinner when buying clothes
 - 15% said they take comments about their body with more serenity

SUMMARY

- The most common aim of appearance-related activism was to challenge sociocultural norms and beauty standards (e.g. the thin-ideal) (37%)
 - Fighting weight-related stigma (25%) or stigma associated with visible difference (13%)
 - Less than 1 in 10 focused on changing laws (5%) or governmental policy (4%)
- The most common means used were social media activities (21%), campaigning (17%), specific events (12%) and videos/short films (10%)
- Most activist efforts were either ongoing (38%) or single-day events (24%)
- Most activities were directed at the general public rather than specific groups
 - Only 5% targeted industry and 6% targeted the government

LIMITATIONS

- Collaborating partners had different resources, time to commit, access to information (e.g., network of colleagues, etc)
- Multiple languages within the same country
- Easier to find national efforts than local initiatives
- Easier to find efforts related to organizations than individual efforts
- If efforts were not documented by the media, they were often invisible
- **Important:** If activist efforts were not included in this project, it does NOT mean they did not take place or were not good

OPEN FOR DISCUSSION...

- When is activism NOT related to appearance?
 - Visible disabilities, cancer and illnesses that alter appearance...
- Is the aim to alter sociocultural views on appearance or to make someone feel better about their appearance?
 - Are body image classes or lectures a form of activism?
 - What about training fitness instructors or medical professionals in body image issues?