



Youth Mental Health Handbook

MEET Project Output 1.2

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List of acronyms

MEET	Mental Well-being in Education for Disadvantaged Youth project
DR	Danube Region
PP	Project Partner
YMH	Youth mental health
YMHL	Youth Mental Health Lab

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Part 1: Youth Mental Health Labs - Methodology

1. Introduction to the methodology

This methodology was developed by project partners (PPs) of the Mental Well-being in Education for Disadvantaged Youth ('MEET') project.¹ The project was funded by the EU Interreg Danube Region Interreg Programme for the duration of 30 months (01 Jan 2024 – 30 June 2026).² The aim of the project was to build capacities for youth mental health promotion in formal and nonformal education and training through the development of inclusive and innovative tools and materials. By doing so, the project contributed to combating mental health problems among young people and enable a better educated workforce and contribute to reduced labour shortages.

The purpose of this document is to support organisations in planning and implementing youth mental health labs (YMHL) in their contexts. This includes a comprehensive overview of the implementation process. This guide further emphasizes the importance of stakeholder engagement, risk mitigation, and continuous reflection. This document aims to serve as a comprehensive guide for organizations looking to implement YMHL to promote youth mental health and well-being. The methodology was tested by 15 MEET project partner organisations in 11 countries in the Danube Region (DR).

YMHL can help build new and to strengthen existing alliances at the local and regional level to successfully embed strategies for supporting youth mental health. Formal and non-formal education systems, along with social and youth services, face numerous challenges in promoting the mental health and well-being of young people. Factors such as social pressures, academic stress, and lack of access to mental health resources contribute to these challenges. In response, the concept of "(Living) Labs" has emerged as a potential solution to foster collaboration, innovation, and the development of sustainable mental health practices. Living Labs, as open knowledge systems/innovations, have been identified as having the potential to fill these gaps.³ The Living Lab method is a user-centred approach that aims to innovate and improve the development of products, services and systems. This method has become increasingly important in various sectors as new solutions are needed to meet growing and evolving needs. The European Network of Living Labs (n.d.) emphasizes that Living Labs can help address the above challenges by providing a platform for collaboration and innovation among various stakeholders, including educators, youth representatives, policymakers, and practitioners.

YMHL have the following objectives:

Objective 1: jointly discuss the problems of youth mental health in a region or country.

Objective 2: develop or pilot-test innovative tools or solutions to support youth mental health with relevant stakeholders.

Objective 3: co-create potential solutions to the challenges of youth mental health.

¹ MEET, [interreg-danube.eu](https://interreg-danube.eu/projects/meet). Last accessed on 16 July 2024. <https://interreg-danube.eu/projects/meet>.

² DRP at a glance, [interreg-danube.eu](https://interreg-danube.eu/drp-at-a-glance). Last accessed on 16 July 2024. <https://interreg-danube.eu/drp-at-a-glance>.

³ Archibald et al. (2021).

Objective 4: seek feedback and further adapt and refine an organisation' approach to youth mental health labs.

Following this introduction, this guide consists of the following chapters:

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the purpose and key elements of 'Living Labs'.

Chapter 3 describes each phase of the process of conducting Living Labs. These phases include preparation ([Phase 1](#)), implementation ([Phase 2](#)), and analysis and write-up ([Phase 3](#)).

Chapter 4 presents some strategies for success, and some potential risks to avoid, to help support the implementation of YMHL.

Chapter 5 summarises this guides' key points.

2. Key elements of Youth Mental Health Labs

The concept of Living Labs has emerged in recent years as an alternative approach to traditional innovation methods, particularly in the context of user-centred innovation. Living Labs are collaborative research and innovation environments where stakeholders, such as citizens, companies, researchers, and public authorities, work together to develop and test new solutions in real-life contexts.⁴ The Living Lab approach can provide a holistic and systemic understanding of user needs, which can lead to the creation of innovative and sustainable solutions. This chapter aims to provide an overview of the Living Lab concept and methodology, including its key characteristics, principles, and benefits. Additionally, it will describe the Living Lab preparation and implementation phases, as well as the methods and tools that can be used to support these processes. The subchapters will focus on defining Living Labs and their methodology in more detail, providing a foundation for understanding and applying this approach in different contexts.

Living Labs have been identified as an effective approach for user-driven innovation and co-creation. The concept of Living Labs emerged in the late 1990s and has gained popularity in various sectors, including health care.⁵ Living Labs can be defined as a methodology for capturing, prototyping, validating, and refining complex solutions and developing real-world contexts.⁶ The Living Lab approach seeks to integrate innovation, design, and implementation processes through a collaborative and user-centric approach.⁷ Accordingly, Living Labs create an environment for user-driven innovation, where users are involved in the design and development of new solutions, making it more likely that the solutions will meet their needs.⁸ This means that Living Labs are tools for 'open innovation'.⁹ In contrast to "closed innovation", open innovation is focused on the outside world and emphasizes collaborative innovation rather than centralized, inward-looking innovation. Thus, open Innovation offers benefits such as bridging internal knowledge gaps, sharing costs and risks with partners, while closed innovation relies solely on internal resources, which can be costly and risky.¹⁰ To realise the open innovation character of Living Labs, certain key characteristics should be met.¹¹ These include: user engagement, co-creation, multidisciplinary stakeholder participation, multi-method approaches, and sustainability. Each of these characteristics is described in more detail below. They are also pictured in Figure 1.

- **User engagement:** User engagement is a fundamental characteristic of Living Labs.¹² Stakeholders who will use the designed solutions should be active participants in each phase of conducting Living Labs (see Chapter 3). The type of stakeholders to involve in the Living

⁴ Gascó (2017); Dekker et al. (2020); Hansen and Fuglsang (2020); Følstad (2008); Schuurman and Tönurist (2017).

⁵ Hossain et al. (2019).

⁶ Stahlbrost and Holst (2012).

⁷ Stahlbrost and Holst, 2012.

⁸ Leminen & Westerlund (2019).

⁹ Yazdizadeh and Tavasoli (2016).

¹⁰ Lead Innovation (2023). Last accessed on 22 July 2024. <https://www.lead-innovation.com/insights/blog/open-innovation-vs-closed-innovation>

¹¹ For examples of the different components of living labs, please see Hossain et al. (2019).

¹² Keyson et al. (2017).

Labs are discussed in greater detail in section 3.2.1.

- **Multidisciplinary participation:** Living Labs are “open, collaborative spaces that bring together different actors and organizations from diverse sectors and disciplines to foster innovation.”¹³ The multidisciplinary collaboration allows for a diversity of perspectives, leading to innovative solutions that meet the needs of various stakeholders.
- **Co-creation:** Co-creation is “the process by which end-users and other stakeholders collaborate in a structured way with researchers, developers, and innovators in the design and development of new products, services, or processes.”¹⁴ Living Labs provide a platform for co-creation, where decisions-makers, end-users, researchers, and other stakeholders collaborate to develop new solutions.
- **Multi-method approaches:** Given the different types of stakeholders involved in the process, a variety of methods should be used to capture their inputs (e.g. interviews, focus groups, workshops etc). In addition, methods such as conducting literature reviews and stakeholder mapping exercise ensure that the newly developed solutions are based on the best available evidence.
- **Sustainability:** An important goal of the YMHL is to help build new and to strengthen existing alliances at the local and regional level to successfully embed strategies for supporting youth mental health. Accordingly, a key element of labs is working toward sustainability of the newly built relationships amongst stakeholders. Examples of this can include participants founding a community of practice, or other types of alliances, to continue working towards supporting youth mental health.¹⁵

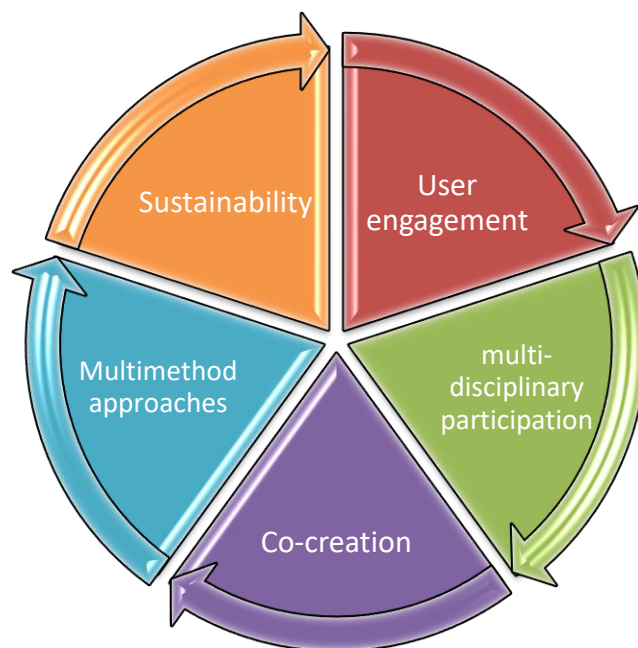


Figure 1: Key elements of Youth Mental Health Labs

¹³ Almirall and Wareham (2011).

¹⁴ Guzmán et al. (2013).

¹⁵ Pyrko et al. (2017).

2.1 Limitations of Living Lab Methodology

Living Labs, while offering a promising approach to co-creation and innovation, especially in complex and sensitive areas like youth mental health, are not without limitations. These challenges can significantly impact the labs' ability to achieve desired outcomes and broader societal impact.

One limitation is the difficulty in **ensuring participation from diverse stakeholders**. Although Living Labs are designed to be inclusive, involving a broad range of participants such as youth, mental health professionals, and policymakers, maintaining active engagement over time can be challenging. Youth participants may feel marginalized in the presence of adults or experts, which can hinder their full participation. Research indicates that power imbalances within Living Labs can lead to certain voices, especially those from marginalized groups, being less effectively heard.¹⁶ In Youth Mental Health Labs, this challenge is heightened as the target group may have specific needs or vulnerabilities requiring careful adaptation of the lab environment.

The **resource-intensive nature of Living Labs** is another limitation that cannot be overlooked. Establishing and maintaining a Living Lab requires substantial investment in time, financial resources, and skilled personnel. In the context of youth mental health, where resources are often limited, sustaining such an initiative over the long term can be challenging. Furthermore, the need for specialized knowledge and skills to manage the intricacies of a Living Lab may restrict its scalability or replication in other regions lacking similar resources.¹⁷

Ethical considerations are also a concern, particularly when dealing with vulnerable populations like youth in mental health contexts. One key ethical concern is the voluntary nature of participant involvement. Although participation is often described as voluntary, there can be implicit pressures, such as group dynamics, that make it difficult for participants to withdraw or refuse to engage, which is particularly relevant in youth mental health settings.¹⁸ Another issue is the assumption that participants are motivated solely by the potential benefits of their involvement. As Mulder and Stappers (2009) note, Living Labs often implicitly assume that users, including youth, are willing and unpaid contributors, which can lead to ethical concerns about exploitation and consent. Transparency regarding the purpose, benefits, and risks of participation is another significant ethical challenge. This is especially crucial in technology-driven Living Labs, where issues such as privacy, bias, and accountability are prominent.¹⁹ Finally, the complexity of ensuring informed consent, particularly for young participants, is a critical ethical responsibility for those managing Living Labs, as it requires careful consideration of the participants' understanding and willingness to engage (ibid.).

Furthermore, **the potential of Living Labs to serve as effective tools for social change** is limited if the social dimensions of their impacts are not thoroughly understood and evaluated. This lack of focus on social outcomes could impede the broader adoption of innovative solutions developed within these labs, ultimately affecting their sustainability and effectiveness in addressing youth mental health issues. Thus, understanding how Living Labs operate and how they should be

¹⁶ Schuurman et al. (2016).

¹⁷ Leminen, Westerlund, & Nyström (2012).

¹⁸ Habibipour (2024).

¹⁹ Habibipour (2024).

evaluated to maximize their impact is crucial for their success and wider applicability.²⁰

Understanding these limitations is crucial for effectively leveraging the Living Lab methodology in youth mental health projects. While Living Labs offer valuable opportunities for innovation and collaboration, addressing these challenges is essential to ensure that the methodology can be applied effectively and sustainably in diverse contexts.

²⁰ Berberi et al. (2023).

3. Conducting YMHL

Setting up YMHL involves several phases that can vary depending on the specific context and goals of the labs.²¹ This guide differentiates between the following three phases: preparation, implementation, and assessing results. Each phase will be discussed in more detail below.

3.1 Phase 1: Preparation

In Phase 1: Preparation, the initial planning and scoping of the YMHL takes place. This includes completing the following tasks:

- Task 1: Literature review
- Task 2: Stakeholder mapping
- Task 3: 2-3 expert interviews

The objectives of these tasks are to provide an assessment of the needs and challenges surrounding youth mental health in a particular region. In addition, it will provide organisations with the necessary information to successfully plan and set up the workshop sessions that make-up phase 2 of the YMHL.

3.1.1 Task 1: Literature review

The purpose of the literature review is to conduct a thorough assessment of the needs and challenges in the context of youth mental health. Organisations will need to prepare a list of relevant key words and concepts in their respective language and in English and type them into a database or search engine. Depending on their organisation's purpose or structure, and depending on location, different PPs may have access to different databases. Common examples include Google and Google Scholar. Other helpful databases might be accessible through national libraries or local universities. PPs might also want to search for and consider available open-source databases.

Possible keywords could include youth mental health; youth mental health challenges; youth mental health needs; youth mental health assessment; youth mental health interventions; youth wellbeing; youth mental health support; youth depression and anxiety; early intervention in youth mental health; youth mental health policy; mental health barriers; youth mental health programmes; youth mental health awareness; NEETs and mental health, vulnerable groups and mental health; early school leavers and mental health; mental well-being; psychosocial health; psychological illness/disease/well-being; ill mental health; challenges; barriers to seeking support, etc.

To ensure that every PP country obtains relevant, accurate, and up-to-date information, Tabel 1 presents certain inclusion and exclusion criteria to apply when selecting sources to include in the review. In some databases, it might be possible to select these parameters when searching (e.g. limiting search results by publication dates).

²¹ See, for example, Huang and Thomas (2021).

Table 1: Literature review sources inclusion and exclusion criteria

Criteria	Include	Exclude
Source publication date	Sources published within the last five years	Sources published earlier than 5 years ago
Geographic remit	Sources that cover individual PP countries or the Danube Region	Sources that focus exclusively on countries/regions other than any of the PP country
Publisher	• (online)books/book chapters • Academic journal articles • Government reports • NGO reports • Credible news sources	• Wikipedia entries • Social media posts • Blog posts / 'news' items from a non-credible source

Box 1 provides an overview of steps commonly involved in a literature review.

Common steps involved in conducting literature reviews:

- Identify relevant keywords and search strings
- Select relevant databases
- Carry out the search in accordance with inclusion and exclusion criteria
- Screen titles (and, if necessary, abstracts) against inclusion and exclusion criteria.
- Review selected sources in full and complete extraction template
- Conduct 'hand-search' for information that is still missing
- Write-up / reporting of results

Box 1. Common steps involved in conducting literature reviews

Writing up results can follow this structure:

1. Overview and introduction
2. Common mental health challenges for youth in PP country
3. Impacts of mental health challenges
4. Available solutions and remaining gaps
5. Target group specific information
6. Conclusion

3.1.2 Task 2: Stakeholder mapping and recruitment

As mentioned in previous section, a crucial aspect of YMHL is the close involvement of relevant stakeholders. The active involvement of vital stakeholders, including youth representatives, educators, policy makers, and practitioners, is indispensable for nurturing diverse viewpoints and fostering collaborative endeavours.

Accordingly, one of the first task to undertake during Phase 1 is a detailed stakeholder mapping. A list of types of stakeholders relevant to youth mental health can be found in Box 2.

In conducting this stakeholder mapping, organisations may want to consider the following:

- *Include a variety of types of stakeholders:* This includes youth, youth representatives, educators, policy makers, practitioners, healthcare providers, community leaders, and other individuals or organizations invested in youth mental well-being at the local and regional levels.
- *Rationales for including stakeholders:* In the mapping, it should be clear why a stakeholder was chosen. Characteristics to support this decision can include factors such as expertise in mental health, experience working with youth populations, familiarity with local healthcare and education systems, and a demonstrated commitment to advancing youth mental well-being. Other criteria could be:
 - **Level of influence:** The stakeholders' level of influence on the project's objectives and outcomes is a crucial factor in identifying key stakeholders. Those with significant influence should be given priority.
 - **Level of interest:** Stakeholders with a high level of interest in the project, either positive or negative, should also be considered since they can impact the project's success.
 - **Expertise and knowledge:** Stakeholders with expertise and knowledge in youth mental health and related fields can provide valuable input into the project.
 - **Availability and accessibility:** Stakeholders who are readily available and accessible should also be considered since they can provide timely input and feedback.
- *Promote diversity:* Foster inclusivity by promoting diverse participation among stakeholders. Aim to engage participants from diverse backgrounds, including different age groups, genders, ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, and geographic locations. This ensures that the Youth Mental Health Lab's solutions are inclusive and responsive to the varied needs of young people across the community.

Box 2 “Potential Participants”

Practitioners: This category includes mental health professionals such as psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors, and therapists who work directly with young people. Their insights and expertise in clinical practice are essential for informing the development and implementation of effective interventions within the Living Lab context.

Policy makers: Engaging policymakers at local, regional, and national levels is crucial for creating supportive policy environments and allocating resources to address youth mental health issues. Their involvement can help translate research findings and community needs into actionable policy initiatives and funding priorities.

Youth representatives: Actively involving young people as key stakeholders and decision-makers ensures that their voices and experiences are central to the Living Lab process. Youth representatives from diverse backgrounds and experiences can provide valuable insights into the lived realities of mental health challenges facing young people today.

Youth: Beyond being represented by youth representatives, involving young people (ages 16-24) directly in the Living Lab activities empowers them to contribute their ideas, perspectives, and creativity to the co-creation of solutions for improving youth mental well-being.

Health experts: In addition to practitioners, engaging broader health experts such as public health professionals, researchers, and academics specializing in youth mental health can enrich the Living Lab discussions with evidence-based insights and best practices from the field.

Educators: Teachers, school counselors, and education administrators play a critical role in supporting the mental well-being of young people within educational settings. Their participation in the Living Lab can help identify opportunities to integrate mental health promotion strategies into school curricula and student support services.

Other relevant individuals or organizations: This category encompasses a wide range of stakeholders, including nonprofit organizations, community-based groups, advocacy organizations, and philanthropic foundations, all of whom have a vested interest in supporting the mental well-being of young people. Their diverse perspectives and resources can contribute to the development of holistic and sustainable approaches to youth mental health promotion within the Living Lab framework.

Box 2. Types of stakeholders to involve in YMHL

3.1.3 Task 3: Expert interviews

The purpose of these interviews is twofold. First, the findings of the interviews are supposed to contribute to the assessment of youth mental health challenges in the region. Second, interviewees should be asked about their views on conducting Phase 2 and 3 of the Living Lab approach. As mentioned in Chapter 2, co-creation is a key element of Living Labs. To ensure their effectiveness, PPs should consult interviewees about how to best conduct the process and what stakeholders to

include. The stakeholder mapping (Section 3.1.2.) will provide PPs with useful information on stakeholders to contact for interviews. As the key target group, one interviewee should be a young person. Details on how to recruit and brief young people are included in section 4.1.1.

To be able to make an informed decision about whether they want to participate or not, all interviewees need to receive information about the purpose of the project and the interview, how their data will be used and reported, and how the interview will be conducted. Interviewees need to confirm having received this information and give clear consent to participate. In addition to following these general guidelines, organisations are responsible to ensure that they follow all ethical guidelines procedures of their own organisation and their countries. Materials need to be adapted to local contexts and the type of stakeholder contacted. For example, when conducting interviews with young people or vulnerable groups, the interview material, setting, and ethics forms will need to be adapted appropriately.

3.2 Phase 2: Implementation

The implementation of the Youth Mental Health Lab involves a multifaceted process that demands meticulous planning and execution. Once Phase 1 (Section 3.1) concludes, the focus transitions to the Phase 2: Implementation stage. During this phase, PP countries will consult stakeholder in the following sessions, following an “**ABC**” format:

- Session 1: **A**chieving a common understanding of youth mental health challenges in PP region (Section 3.2.1)
- Session 2: **B**uilding solutions (Section 3.2.2.)
- Session 3: Planning for **C**hange (Section 3.2.3)

Each YMHL should include a diverse set of stakeholders. Ideally, they should be the same for all sessions. Labs should have between 7-15 participants. Depending on the actual number of participants, it might be advisable to split participants into different groups. Ideally, young people should participate in each lab.

In this section, we will examine the objectives, procedural steps, and outcomes of each session, elucidating how they collectively contribute to the overall efficacy of the Youth Mental Health Lab in addressing mental health challenges among young people.

3.2.1 Session 1: Achieving a common understanding

The session titled “Achieving a common understanding” serves the purpose of fostering consensus among stakeholders on the key mental health challenges facing youth in the country. Within that, workshop participants should consider challenges for different target groups: NEET youth, Roma youth, and ESL youth. This session should consist of the following parts:

1. Present the objectives of the YMHL in particular and the deliverables, tools or solutions to be discussed.
2. Brainstorm about the key problems and challenges of youth mental health to be addressed, keeping in mind different target groups.
3. Decide collectively on 4-6 key challenges to be addressed and begin identifying the changes and resources needed to address them.
4. Evaluate Session 1

3.2.2 Session 2: Building solutions

Building on Session 1, the second session 2 moves into co-designing necessary solutions to address the key mental health challenges identified in Workshop 1.

During Session 2, participants will develop or provide feedback on any tools or solutions selected by the organisers. This session can be delivered in a multitude of ways. Organisers might want to choose interactive formats where everyone can contribute their views.

As with Session 1, to help achieve Objective 5 of this activity (Piloting the Youth Mental Health Lab Methodology), it will be important to ask participants for feedback on Session 2 itself.

3.2.3 Session 3: Planning for change

Session 3: Planning for change serves as the final stage in the implementation of YMHL. The objective of this session is for participants to plan a way forward on who to implement the discussed solutions. During this session, participants should also address one of the key aspects of the labs (Chapter 2): Sustainability. What do participants want to do to sustain the new relationships build while collaborating in the labs? participants should also discuss how the alliances formed through participation in the labs can be sustained for the future (e.g. establishing a community of practice, a youth forum etc).

There should also be time dedicated to preparing for Phase 3 (section 3.3.). Organisers will want to collect comprehensive data on the Youth Mental Health Lab process. Participants should reflect on the successes and challenges encountered during the Youth Mental Health Lab process. What aspects were particularly effective, and why? What obstacles were faced, and how were they addressed? This assessment will illuminate key learnings and inform future initiatives. Participants should identify concrete actions for improvement. Any areas for improvement and relevant actions to help address identified in Lab 1 session 3 should be addressed and implemented during Lab 2. Any reflection from that process, should be noted in the report (see next section).

3.3 Phase 3: Reflection, analysis and write-up

Reflection and feedback loops play a pivotal role in the learning process, enabling individuals or organizations to learn from experiences and refine their actions for improved future performance. They are integral to the methodology, fostering continuous improvement and ensuring the intervention's effectiveness and efficiency. Feedback loops involve a cycle of feedback, reflection, and action, facilitating the identification of strengths and weaknesses and subsequent adjustments to enhance outcomes. By following these steps and committing to a culture of reflection and continuous improvement, the lab can evolve and thrive, effectively addressing the mental well-being of young people.

In Phase 3 of the YMHL, organisers should conduct an analysis of the collected data. Look for trends, patterns, and areas of strength and weakness. This analysis will reveal opportunities for improvement and inform strategic decision-making. Through open innovation, design thinking and creative workshop methods, stakeholders will have co-created ideas on how to address the challenges and needs relating to youth-mental health in their region.

4. Strategies for success and risks to avoid when implementing Living Labs

4.1 Strategies for success

This section will review some factors that are key to implementing Living Labs successfully.

4.1.1 Successful stakeholder engagement

When approaching stakeholders to participate in the Youth Mental Health Lab, it's important to be inclusive, respectful, and transparent. Here are some tips for approaching different stakeholder groups:

[Suggestions on recruiting and engaging youth participants](#)

Below, we present some of their recommendations on how to recruit (vulnerable) young people and ensure that engagement is meaningful and mutually beneficial.

It is important to ask the young person what he/she needs to attend the Lab(s) and to feel comfortable to participate. Some may prefer that there is someone who guides them through the process.²² Ideally, this would be a 'trusted' person, someone known to them, or at least someone with relevant experience.²³ This could also be one of their friends.

It might also be helpful to offer flexible participation options, such as virtual meetings, evening sessions, to accommodate their schedules and preferences.²⁴ Thus the lab(s) will be adapted according to the requirements of the young people to enable their participation and ensure they feel comfortable during the Lab(s). Empower youth to take on leadership roles within the project, allowing them to shape decisions and contribute their unique perspectives.

Participation may come easier to some young people than others. Research on child and youth participation suggests that people with a more privileged upbringing have a better understanding of their right to participation, then people who have experienced disadvantage.²⁵ Facilitating the inclusion of vulnerable groups can require targeted efforts that go beyond advertising the opportunity.²⁶ Organisations who do not provide direct services to young people or who do not have access a structure that would facilitate contact are encouraged to reach out to local organisation who could support recruitment. In addition, organisations might want to consider approaching schools, youth centres, and other spaces designated to young people and present the opportunity in person.²⁷ In any case, language and messaging that resonates with youth should be used and the benefits and risks of participation clearly explained.

²² Janta et al (2021).

²³ Janta et al (2021).

²⁴ View of PP providing direct services to young people

²⁵ Janta et al (2021).

²⁶ Janta et al (2021).

²⁷ View of PP providing direct services to young people

There is also the option of offering participating young people some compensation for their time. This is show that their time and input is valued. In addition, other participants will most likely participate in the Labs as part of their paid capacity. This can, for example, include cash incentives or vouchers.²⁸

Suggestion on recruiting policymakers

- Engage policymakers through official channels such as government agencies, legislative offices, or professional associations.
- Highlight the relevance of the YMHL to policy objectives and priorities, emphasizing the potential for evidence-based interventions to inform policy decisions and improve outcomes for young people.
- Provide clear and concise information about the project, its goals, and expected outcomes, demonstrating how policymakers can contribute to and benefit from their involvement.

Briefing stakeholders

Before recruiting stakeholders, provide them with comprehensive briefings to ensure they understand the purpose, objectives, and expectations of their involvement in the YMHL. Here's how you can conduct effective briefings:

- *Tailored Information:* Tailor briefing materials for each stakeholder group, providing relevant information that addresses their interests, concerns, and potential contributions to the project.
- *Clear Communication:* Use plain language and avoid jargon or technical terms that may be unfamiliar to stakeholders. Clearly explain the goals of the Youth Mental Health Lab, the roles and responsibilities of participants, and the expected outcomes of their involvement.
- *Interactive Sessions* (especially for young people): Offer interactive briefing sessions where stakeholders get familiar with the structure and the purpose of the Lab(s).
- *Accessibility Considerations:* Consider accessibility needs when planning briefing sessions, providing accommodations such as sign language interpreters, captioning, or accessible materials for stakeholders with disabilities.
- *Establish clear expectations:* Transparently communicate the objectives, scope, and expectations of the Youth Mental Health Lab to prospective participants. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of participants, the anticipated time commitment, and the collaborative process. This clarity empowers participants to actively engage in the initiative with a clear understanding of their contributions.
- *Provide support and training:* Recognize that participants may require support and training to effectively engage in the YMHL. Offer resources, guidance, and training opportunities to equip participants with the skills and knowledge needed to contribute meaningfully to the initiative. This may include training sessions on youth mental health awareness, effective communication strategies, and co-creation methodologies.

By taking a thoughtful and inclusive approach to recruiting and briefing stakeholders, you can ensure that all participants, including youth and adults such as policymakers, feel informed,

²⁸ For additional information on this issue, the following sources might be of interest: Seymour, K. (2012). Using incentives: Encouraging and recognising participation in youth research. *Youth Studies Australia*, 31(3), 51-59; Afkinich JL, Blachman-Demner DR. Providing Incentives to Youth Participants in Research: A Literature Review. *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics*. 2020;15(3):202-215; Largent EA, Lynch HF. Paying Research Participants: The Outsized Influence of "Undue Influence". *IRB*. 2017 Jul-Aug;39(4):1-9. PMID: 29038611; PMCID: PMC5640154.

empowered, and motivated to actively contribute to the lab.

4.1.2 Fostering an inclusive workshop environment

There are various communication strategies and methods for promoting equal participation of all social groups in YMHL.²⁹ In general, it is important to ensure that processes are conducted ethically and without bias. An important aspect of engaging diverse stakeholders in labs is also to ensure that participation is accessible and inclusive. This means considering potential barriers to participation, such as language, cultural differences, or physical disabilities, and providing accommodations and support as needed. It also means being sensitive to power dynamics that may exist between different stakeholder groups and taking steps to address these imbalances. Thus, organisers should create awareness among possible participants that everyone can contribute to co-creation, regardless of skills or experience.³⁰ By using different strategies, all stakeholders are given an equal opportunity to contribute and participate in the process. This fosters a sense of inclusivity, where all voices are heard and valued. In addition, different social groups bring different perspectives, experiences, and needs. Also, when all social groups are included in the process, the resulting solutions are more likely to meet the needs of diverse user groups. This can lead to improved outcomes for all stakeholders involved.³¹

Some of these strategies are:

- **Co-design:** Co-design is a process where diverse stakeholders collaborate to design solutions to complex problems. In YMHL, co-design can facilitate participation of all social groups in the innovation process, ensuring that the needs of all stakeholders are considered. This approach has been shown to promote equity in innovation and lead to more inclusive outcomes.
- **Empowerment:** Empowerment involves giving individuals and communities the skills and knowledge they need to take control of their lives and participate fully in society. In labs, empowerment strategies can be used to promote the participation of marginalized groups in the innovation process. For example, workshops can be organized to help individuals develop the skills and knowledge needed to participate in the innovation process.
- **Communication tools:** The use of communication tools such as social media, online platforms, and mobile apps can facilitate the participation of diverse stakeholders. These tools can enable remote participation and provide access to information, making it easier for individuals who may not be able to attend physical meetings to participate in the innovation process.
- **Cultural competence:** Cultural competence involves understanding and respecting the cultural differences of diverse stakeholders. During labs, cultural competence can be promoted by ensuring that the innovation process is designed to be culturally sensitive and respectful of the needs and values of diverse stakeholders.
- **Inclusive language:** The use of inclusive language can promote the participation of all social groups in labs. Inclusive language is language that avoids gender and cultural biases and includes everyone. This can help to create an environment that is welcoming and respectful to all stakeholders.

²⁹ See De Witte et al. (2021); Leminen (2013); Ahmadi et al. (2018).

³⁰ Leminen et al. (2015).

³¹ Bergvall-Kåreborn et al. (2009).

- **Be mindful of power dynamics:** Be mindful of power dynamics that may exist between different stakeholders and ensure that everyone's voice is heard, regardless of their position or status.
- **Set ground rules:** Set ground rules for communication and ensure that they are followed. This might include guidelines around respectful communication, allowing everyone a chance to speak, and avoiding interrupting others.
- **Outreach:** Outreach strategies can be used to promote the participation of marginalized and underrepresented groups in labs. These strategies involve actively reaching out to individuals and communities who may not have traditionally been involved in the innovation process. For example, community events and workshops can be organized to engage these groups.

4.1.3 Creating a risk register

As the examples presented in the next chapter will show, there are a range of common risks that can hinder successful implementation of YMHL. Common types of risks can vary by context, depending on type of organization or regional context of the organisers. The table below offers a template for completing such a risk register.

Table 2: Risk register template

Identified risk	Likelihood of occurrence (high, medium, low)	Degree of impact (high, medium, low)	Mitigation strategy

4.2 Common risks and potential mitigation strategies

The literature identifies a few common risks that can hinder the success of Living Labs.³² This section briefly introduces these risks and provides potentially helpful mitigation strategies.

4.2.1 Lack of Stakeholder Engagement

It is important to involve all relevant stakeholders from the beginning of the process and to keep them engaged throughout. Failure to do so can result in a lack of buy-in and support, which can lead to the failure of YMHL. Stakeholders play a crucial role in co-creating and implementing innovative solutions that address the needs and challenges of the community. Without their input and involvement, the labs may fail to deliver solutions that are relevant, effective, and sustainable.³³ To overcome lack of stakeholder engagement, labs should prioritize and invest in effective stakeholder engagement strategies.³⁴ The following are some ways to achieve this:

- **Identify and involve all relevant stakeholders,** including end-users, experts, policymakers,

³² Adenskog et al. (2017).

³³ See, for example, Van Geenhuizen (2018).

³⁴ Niitamo et al. (2006).

and community representatives. This ensures that all perspectives are represented and considered in the co-creation and implementation of solutions.

- **Foster a culture of co-creation** where all stakeholders are encouraged to share their ideas and opinions. This can be achieved through collaborative workshops, co-design sessions, and other participatory methods that facilitate open dialogue and idea sharing.
- **Build trust and relationships** with stakeholders. This includes establishing open and transparent communication channels, building personal relationships, and fostering a sense of shared ownership and responsibility for the initiative.
- **Provide incentives and rewards** to stakeholders as an effective way to encourage engagement and participation. This can include financial incentives, recognition and awards, or access to resources and training.
- **Evaluate and iterate** stakeholder engagement strategies to ensure they remain effective and relevant. This can include gathering feedback from stakeholders, measuring engagement levels, and adapting strategies as needed.

By prioritizing effective stakeholder engagement strategies, YMHL can overcome the lack of stakeholder engagement and ensure that their initiatives are co-created and implemented in a way that addresses the needs and challenges of the community

4.2.2 Limited capacity / insufficient planning

YMHL require planning and preparation to ensure that they are well-designed and that all necessary resources are in place.³⁵ This includes developing a comprehensive project plan that outlines the objectives, goals, and expected outcomes. The project plan should also identify potential risks and develop strategies for mitigating them. In addition, it is important to allocate the necessary resources such as funding, personnel, and infrastructure. Lastly, it is important to continually monitor the project plan, assessing progress towards objectives and goals, and making necessary adjustments based on feedback and results.³⁶

4.2.3 Failure to adapt and evolve

Living Labs are dynamic and ever-changing environments, and it is important to be flexible and willing to adapt as necessary. Failure to do so can result in a YMHL that is outdated, ineffective, and ultimately, unsuccessful.³⁷ To avoid this, organisers should be agile in their approach. This means being responsive to change, being flexible, and being willing to experiment and learn. To facilitate ongoing adaptation and evolution, it is essential to establish a governance structure that allows for continuous improvement. This structure should include regular reviews of the YMHL's vision, goals, and strategies, as well as a process for implementing changes. The team should also foster a culture of innovation, encouraging stakeholders to experiment with new ideas and technologies, and providing the support needed to turn these ideas into reality.³⁸ In addition, it is crucial to maintain open lines of communication with stakeholders and to involve them in the ongoing development of the YMHL. This means regularly soliciting feedback and suggestions from stakeholders and using this feedback to drive improvements and innovation. It is also essential to keep stakeholders

³⁵ Westerlund & Leminen (2011).

³⁶ Dane et al. (2020).

³⁷ Bhana et al. (2016).

³⁸ Ståhlbröst & Holst (2017).

informed about changes in the lab and to provide them with the resources and support they need to adapt to these changes.³⁹

Finally, it is important to establish clear metrics for measuring the success of the YMHL and to regularly assess progress against these metrics. This allows the organisers to identify areas of concern and to take corrective action as needed.

4.2.4 Lack of transparency

Transparency is key to the success of a YMHL, and it is important to communicate openly and honestly with all stakeholders about the process, goals, and outcomes. Lack of transparency can lead to mistrust and suspicion, which can ultimately undermine its success. It is important to establish clear communication channels and ensure that all stakeholders have access to relevant information about the YMHL. This can be achieved through regular updates, progress reports, and workshops that involve all stakeholders. Moreover, establishing a culture of openness and transparency is crucial. This can be done by encouraging feedback and suggestions from stakeholders and being willing to make changes based on their input. It is also important to have a clear understanding of the ethical and legal implications of the Living Lab and ensure that these are communicated effectively to all stakeholders. To ensure transparency, it is also important to establish clear guidelines for data sharing and confidentiality. This includes ensuring that all data collected in the Living Lab is secure and that stakeholders are aware of how their data will be used.⁴⁰

³⁹ Niitamo et al. (2006).

⁴⁰ Von Wirth et al. (2019).

5. Conclusion

The Youth Mental Health Lab (YMHL) methodology stands as a beacon of promise in our pursuit to enhance youth mental health initiatives. By providing a collaborative and user-centred approach, it offers organizations a promising avenue to develop, test, and implement innovative solutions tailored to the unique needs of young people.

While the potential for impactful outcomes is vast, achieving success hinges on meticulous planning, execution, and evaluation of the YMHL process. This guide offers a comprehensive roadmap, detailing the essence of the methodology, its core characteristics, and step-by-step guidelines for establishing and operating YMHL. Emphasizing the crucial role of stakeholder involvement and communication, it underscores the necessity for continuous adaptation and evolution to meet evolving challenges and opportunities.

Furthermore, the guide addresses potential risks of implementation and offers practical mitigation strategies, alongside outlining best practices conducive to their triumph. With a steadfast aim to foster innovation and collaboration across sectors, it equips organizations with the tools and insights needed to develop user-driven, sustainable solutions that address the complex healthcare challenges faced by young people today and in the future.

As a practical tool for organizations, this guideline serves to facilitate the structured and effective implementation of the YMHL methodology. Through its guidance, we aspire to catalyse innovation, foster collaboration, and provide enduring solutions to the pressing mental health challenges of today and tomorrow, ensuring a brighter future for young people.

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Part 2: Youth-centred best practices catalogue

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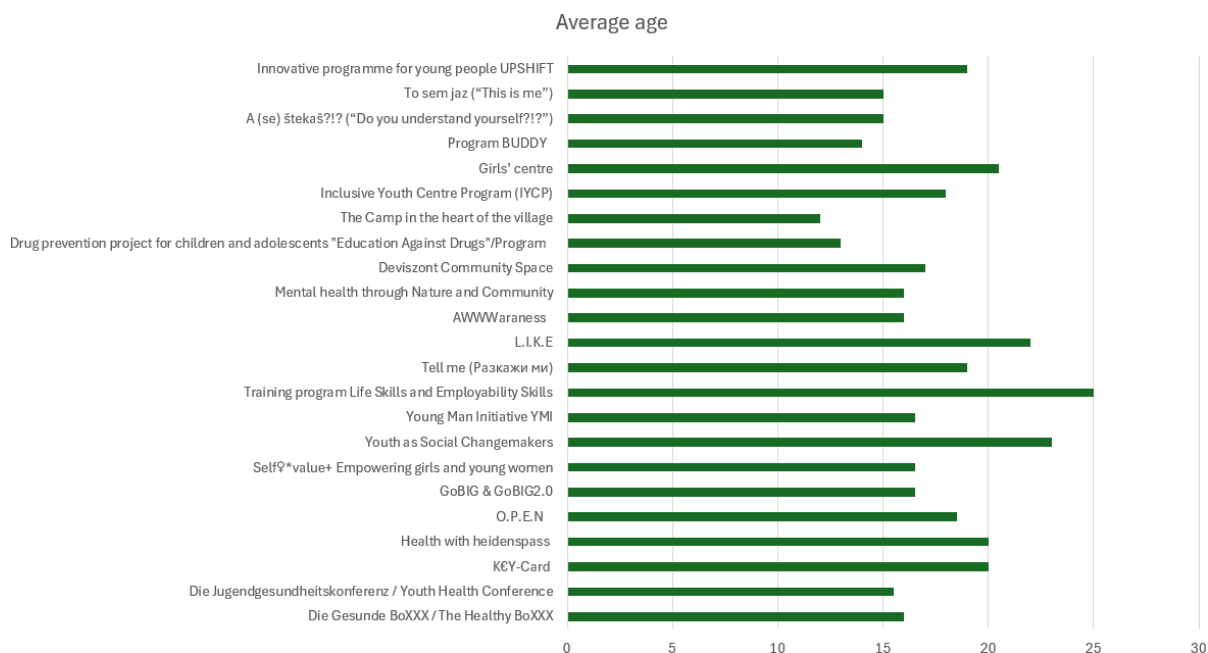
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Average age of target groups by intervention



Organization	Min. age	Max. age	Average age
Gesund aus der Krise		21	
Die Gesunde BoXXX / The Healthy BoXXX	12	20	16
Die Jugendgesundheitskonferenz / Youth Health Conference	12	19	15,5
K€Y-Card	15	25	20
Health with heidenspass	15	25	20
O.P.E.N	16	21	18,5
GoBIG & GoBIG2.0	10	23	16,5
Self♀*value+ Empowering girls and young women	12	21	16,5
GAAS			
Youth as Social Changemakers	16	30	23
Young Man Initiative YMI	14	19	16,5
Training program Life Skills and Employability Skills	15	35	25
Tell me (Разкажи ми)	14	24	19
Well@School project			
L.I.K.E	15	29	22
e-Lektra			
PorT			
RRRR			
Safe school			
AWWWariness	14	18	16

Mental health through Nature and Community	14	18	16
Deviszont Community Space	14	20	17
Tanoda (After-school) Programme			
Downtown Tanoda Foundation High School			
Szikra Tábor (Spark camp)			
Drug prevention project for children and adolescents "Education Against Drugs"/Program"	7	19	13
Harm reduction services related to use of injected drugs			
Accessibility and transparency risk mitigation services			
The Camp in the heart of the village	6	18	12
Personal development workshops			
Inclusive Youth Centre Program (IYCP)	12	24	18
Girls' centre	16	25	20,5
Strengthening mental health through community support networks			
DIALOGUE from ECO anxiety to ECO action			
Program BUDDY	12	16	14
Project Chuť žít		30	
IPčko crisis counselling service		30	
A (se) štekaš?!? ("Do you understand yourself?!?")	12	18	15
To sem jaz ("This is me")	13	17	15
Nacionalna mreža TOM			
Mental Help – PACT			
All-Ukrainian mental health programme			
Innovative programme for young people UPSHIFT	14	24	19

1. Introduction to the youth-centred best practices catalogue

The MEET project aims to enhance **the mental health of young people, particularly those who are vulnerable**, in Austria, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Hungary, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Ukraine, and the Danube Region. The project is funded by the Inter-regional Danube Region Programme (DRP), which is a transnational funding programme co-funded by the European Union. Mental disorders affect a high percentage of young people aged 10-19 in the Danube Region. Ongoing crises like COVID-19, the Ukraine war, and climate change are increasingly threatening the mental well-being of young people. Given the global scale of these challenges, a collaborative, transnational approach is essential.

MEET focuses on building capacities for promoting youth mental health through both formal and informal educational settings at three levels:

- Practice Level: MEET will collaboratively develop and pilot inclusive, innovative, and youth-centered tools and learning materials for educators, social workers, practitioners, and at-risk young people (such as those not in education, employment, or training, and early school leavers).
- Organizational Level: MEET will unite key health and education stakeholders in Youth Mental Health Labs to form new cross-sector mental health coalitions, enhancing their knowledge and providing a methodology for future cooperation.
- Policy Level: MEET will create a transnational strategy and local action plans to integrate mental health into education, offering policymakers guidelines on making education policies more inclusive.

MEET's innovative approach targets both formal education (like schools) and non-formal education (such as after-school programs and youth NGOs), which are crucial for reaching disadvantaged learners and vulnerable youth. The project also aims to address social inequalities by engaging young people in rural areas and Roma communities.

Ultimately, MEET will help combat mental health issues among young people, particularly those in vulnerable groups. In the long term, the project aims to improve school performance, reduce dropout rates, lower the number of NEETs, create a better-educated workforce, and alleviate labor shortages.

1.1 Purpose

This **Catalogue** serves the purpose of mapping youth-centred best practices in Europe in order to collect them and create a catalogue of youth-centred best practices. The country reports (D1.1.1) contain best practices collected by project partners of MEET, these reports constitute the base for the catalogue (D1.1.3). The selection of these practices was guided by the SPICE framework, ensuring a structured and thorough assessment. Partners conducted secondary research, interviews, and questionnaires to gather detailed insights, which were then analyzed statistically.

The information presented focus on best practices describing programmes and intervention in formal and informal/nonformal education to improve the well-being and mental health of young people, **with a particular focus on at-risk youth (NEET, ESL)**.

This resource will inform further project activities, provide valuable insights for future initiatives and policymaking, and promote effective practices to enhance the mental well-being of youth, especially those from vulnerable groups.

1.2 Methodology

The methodology for creating the catalogue of youth-centered best practices in the MEET project is a structured and collaborative approach involving several key steps. It begins with the development of a template based on the SPICE framework (Setting, Perspective, Intervention, Comparison, and Evaluation) to assess and document effective practices that improve youth well-being, particularly for at-risk groups like NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) and early school leavers (ESL). Each participating country partner used a common framework to map and report on their best practices, focusing on interventions in both formal and non-formal educational settings.

The methodology involves secondary research, including reviews of existing programs, along with inter-views and questionnaires to gather detailed insights from both implementers and beneficiaries. Statistical methods are employed to summarize the nature and attributes of these practices. The country re-ports generated from this process form the foundation for a draft catalogue, which is discussed in "Youth Mental Health Labs" with educators, policymakers, and youth representatives to gather feedback.

The final version of the catalogue is adapted based on this feedback to ensure it is comprehensive and applicable across different contexts.

This catalogue aims to provide inspiration for implementing unique initiatives tailored to your specific setting.

1.3 Meaning of the Subheadings

The catalogue describes good practices using different criteria.

Main goals section sets out the main objectives of the good practice, showing the specific impact the programme or initiative aims to have on participants.

Target groups section describes how the programme targets different target groups, such as young people in different life situations, age groups, and other characteristics such as people with social, eco- nomic or psychological challenges.

Description of Intervention section is generally used to describe the programme or project, its objectives, structure and the results it aims to achieve. This section details how the activities are carried out, the tools and methods used to deliver the intervention, and how it facilitates the development of the participants.

Comparison Basis section aims to show how the programme compares with other similar

initiatives, highlighting the elements that distinguish the programme from other practices.

Evaluation of Outcomes section measures the success of the programme, including the criteria for success, the evaluation methods used (quantitative, qualitative or mixed), the impact on the target group and the challenges and how they were addressed.

The section on **(Up)Scalability and allocation** refers to how the programme can be adapted to different target groups and contexts, and how to ensure scalability and efficient allocation of resources to implement the programme. This section shows how the programme can be scaled up and what resources are needed for successful implementation. The **Additional Information and Conclusions** section generally summarises the results, impact and lessons learned from the programme. It may include the experience gained so far, feedback from participants, the success of the programme and possible suggestions for improvement.

Austria

Gesund aus der Krise

Berufsverband Österreichischer PsychologInnen (BÖP)

Austria

Three partners from Austria are involved in the project, which is why they have shared more good practices in the catalogue.

Main goals

To give children, adolescents, and young adults up to the age of 21 who are suffering from mental stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic quick, free, and quality-assured access to 15 free counselling and treatment sessions from clinical psychologists, health psychologists and psychotherapists.

Target groups

Target groups are all children, adolescents, and young adults up to 21.

Description of Intervention

The necessary but drastic measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic had a particularly serious impact on the psyche of children and young people. For this reason, the Council of Ministers decided on 28 July 2021 to provide a one-off sum of EUR 13 million for the psychosocial care of children and young people with mental health problems in order to give them uncomplicated, low-threshold, rapid and free access to clinical-psychological, health-psychological and psychotherapeutic counselling and treatment, psychological, health-psychological and psychotherapeutic counselling and treatment to help them cope with the psychosocial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. 12.2million euros of these funds are available for the "Gesund aus der Krise" project.

"Gesund aus der Krise" is an Austrian-wide offer for free psychosocial care. The aim of "Gesund aus der Krise" is to offer psychosocial care throughout Austria barrier-free and without long waiting times. A hotline service acts as a central point of contact from which people can be referred to suitable counselling and treatment centres. The aim is to (re)empower affected children, adolescents and young adults up to and including the age of 21. Children, adolescents and young adults can call the established contact point or reach out via the online platform. For children who are younger than 14 years, practitioners, referring physicians or institutions and legal guardians can establish contact. After 14, the youngsters were allowed to reach out themselves.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☐ Non-formal education
- ☒ Healthcare
- ☒ Social services
- ☐ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☐ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

After the contact was established, 15 free clinical psychological, health psychological, psychotherapeutic or music therapeutic counselling/treatment sessions in an individual or group setting per child, adolescent and young adult were offered. In 2024 alone, around 10.000 therapy places for affected children, adolescents and young adults aged 0 to 21 throughout Austria were established. The establishment of a service centre was essential in order to be able to offer information and advice on registration and offer placement. The service centre can be contacted via the free hotline 0800 800 122, which was available from Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., and therefore also at off-peak times. Another contact option was the e-mail address info@gesundausderkrise.at. Here, specifically trained service centre staff at Level 1 took telephone calls and written enquiries and, if necessary, forwarded conversations and messages to the two experts at Level 2 (clinical psychologists).

The steps from registration to a successful match can be divided into the following three steps, which are described below:

- In the first step, the client, parent or legal guardian reports the need via the website, hotline or email. Once the data has been entered into the system, it must be confirmed via email by the client or person with legal persons with custody. Only then is the client considered registered. Level 1 carried out a clearing in which the formal criteria were checked. If the voluntary information on the problem revealed a potentially serious case in which the professional possibilities or the 15 units provided by default might not be sufficient, the client was forwarded to Level 2 for professional clarification.
- In a second step, clearing is followed by matching, which is the process of assigning clients to counsellors. Matching is carried out according to the criteria of proximity to place of residence (attention is paid to the possibility of travelling by public transport vs. car and a 30-minute or shorter journey time is aimed for), language, age group, preference of the practitioner's gender and, if possible, desired focus/specialization. As soon as a match is made, the client (or, in the case of clients under the age of 14, their parents or legal guardians) will receive an email with a matching ID and a treatment voucher. This voucher also contains the practitioner's details, in particular their availability by phone and email. At the same time, the practitioner receives an email with the same matching ID, which consists of a four-part sequence of numbers and characters. Clients now have 14 days (at the start of the project it was 30 days) to contact the practitioner with the voucher to arrange an appointment.
- The third step involves counselling and treatment. In the initial consultation, it is determined whether the treatment setting is suitable, including with regard to the counsellor-client relationship and the coverage of the problem with 15 units. A change of practitioner is possible twice in the event that the case the matching is not deemed suitable. If there is a need, a one-off extension of five further free units can be requested, which will be reviewed by Level 2.

875 practitioners made up the practitioner pool throughout Austria. This consisted of 389 clinical psychologists and/or health psychologists and 418 psychotherapists. 68 practitioners were checked and accepted as dual-qualified by the processing centre. The requirement from the special guideline to use at least 500 counsellors was already achieved within the first month, and the gender target ratio of 50 / 50 was almost exactly fulfilled.

In addition to the counselling and treatment offered to the target group, awareness-raising workshops were offered, which impart basic psychological knowledge and awareness of mental balance for extra- curricular work with children and young people. In this way, people working in youth work were sensitized to the topic of mental health in a low-threshold manner.

The workshops were offered in the "Basic" and "Expert" modules in line with the experience background. In addition to reflecting together on the past few years during the COVID-19 pandemic, the workshops also presented and highlighted scientific findings on the impact of the crises experienced on the psyche of children and young people. During the project period, 14 "Basic" and 45 "Expert" sensitisation workshops were offered. Of these offers, 22 "Basic" and 18 "Expert" sensitisation workshops were held due to the minimum number of participants of four people. Most of them took place in an online setting and thus enabled participation across federal states.

In total, over 8,000 clients received counselling and treatment. 15 % of cases resulted in counselling and treatment extensions. The many extension requests show that the counsellors (and clients) often saw a need for additional treatment units. Weighing up this need against the goal of the funding organisation to enable as many clients as possible to access treatment, the extension authorisations were handled with increasing caution.

In summary, the quick, local and free access to clinical-psychological, health-psychological and psycho- therapeutic counselling and treatment has been successfully implemented. The referrals were balanced throughout Austria the average placement time was 11 days. Because referrals were made by a centralised service point throughout Austria, it was possible to respond to individual needs (proximity to place of residence, preference of practitioner/gender, language, specialisations, etc.) could be addressed, which is currently unique in this form for services in the healthcare sector.

The duration was from 01.04.2022 to 30.06.2023 (however, there are follow-up projects, such as healthy from the crisis 2 and 3).

Resources utilised were: 12,2 Mio. €, 875 psychologists (funded by the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (BMSGPK)).

Comparison Basis

A similar initiative is the WienXtra Jugendinfo which takes place in Vienna and is an information and advice centre for young people up to the age of 25 and for all parents, teachers and youth workers. They offer advice, however, they do not offer free psychological care. This initiative was included because "Gesund aus der Krise" is unique, and WienXtra Jugendinfo offers a lot of workshops, cultural highlights and tips on what to do in Vienna. Further, they offer information and advice for youngsters on law, gender, mobbing and psychological care. But they do not offer psychological care themselves.

Evaluation of Outcomes

A total of 13,320 matchings were made for individual settings, and 378 for group settings.

Altogether, more than 8,000 clients received counselling and treatment, surpassing the initial target of 5,000 to 7,600 children and adolescents. In 15% of cases, there were extensions to the counselling and treatment, indicating that both therapists and clients often saw the need for additional sessions. The numerous requests for extensions highlight the ongoing demand for further treatment units. The average placement time for these services was 11 days.

The methodology used in the programme was:

- **Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ):** This behavioural screening tool assessed the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents, measuring emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems, and prosocial behaviour.
- **Kidscreen-10 Index:** This questionnaire measured the health-related quality of life in children and adolescents, focusing on physical and psychological well-being, autonomy, social support, school environment, and social acceptance.
- **Focus Groups with Referrers and Psychologists:** These discussions provided qualitative insights into the program's implementation, challenges, successes, and areas for improvement from the perspectives of those referring clients and delivering the services.

The anonymised documentation provided by practitioners about their clients mainly revealed the following client disorders: Depressive mood up to severe depression including suicidal thoughts; anxiety disorders; problems with eating behaviour; sleep problems, lack of daily structure, excessive consumption of digital media; social problems in the school context, school refusals; conflicts within the family.

On the part of the clients as well as persons with custody rights, there was predominantly positive project-related feedback, including the following aspects: Quick, uncomplicated registration and mediation; Accessibility and availability of the service centre, especially at off-peak times (e.g. Friday late afternoon); High-quality counselling and treatment by professionally qualified staff; Enough counselling and treatment sessions for stabilisation in many cases counselling and treatment units.

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and re-generation
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behavior
- ☐ Addictive behavior
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☒ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☐ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

The program faced several challenges. Only 25% of the 202 offered group sessions could take place due to minimum participant requirements, making it difficult to organize sessions and ensure client participation close to their homes. Out of 85 planned sensitization workshops, only 40 occurred for the same reason. Participant feedback highlighted a preference for more in-person sessions and a

need for more detailed information. Additionally, the option for clients to choose their preferred therapist was discontinued due to practical difficulties. The 15-session limit, even with possible extensions, and the transition to regular care posed significant challenges for both therapists and clients.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

This practice can be adopted and scaled to different levels quite effectively. Its clear framework, proven success, comprehensive evaluation methods, and positive feedback provide a strong foundation for replication. Additionally, the involvement of significant funding and resources, along with collaborative partnerships, supports its scalability. By adjusting participant requirements and addressing identified challenges, the program can be adapted to meet the needs of different regions and populations, making it well-suited for broader implementation.

The implementation of this initiative requires a variety of essential resources. Financial resources are necessary to fund the provision of free counseling sessions and cover operational costs. Trained professionals, including clinical psychologists, health psychologists, and psychotherapists, are vital for delivering high-quality services. Accessible facilities are needed to host counseling sessions, along with technological systems for managing client data and scheduling appointments. Ongoing training and professional development opportunities ensure staff members remain up-to-date with best practices. Robust evaluation tools, such as the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the Kidscreen-10 Index, are essential for assessing program effectiveness.

While the program faced challenges, such as the limited number of group sessions and sensitization workshops due to minimum participant requirements, these issues provide valuable lessons for scaling. Adjusting participant requirements and increasing the flexibility of session types can enhance participation rates. The discontinuation of client-chosen therapists and the challenges in transitioning to regular care indicate areas where logistical improvements can be made to support a smoother scale-up process.

Additional Information and Conclusions

The initiative has made a significant contribution to resilience development by providing quick, free, and quality-assured access to mental health support for children, adolescents, and young adults. Through its provision of counselling and treatment sessions, it has helped individuals cope with the mental stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby fostering resilience. The program's focus on accessibility, timely intervention, and professional support has empowered participants to navigate challenges and build coping mechanisms. Additionally, the comprehensive evaluation framework ensures continuous improvement, enhancing the program's effectiveness in promoting resilience.

You can find more information here:

https://gesundausderkrise.at/wp-content/uploads/0923_Projektbericht-GadK-I.pdf

<https://gesundausderkrise.at/infomaterial/>

https://gesundausderkrise.at/wp-content/uploads/gadk_Infoblatt_A4_8.pdf

<https://gesundausderkrise.at/wp-content/uploads/English-%E2%80%93-Information-sheet.pdf>

(English info sheet)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=W4RrYCQT00o&embeds_referring_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fgesundausderkrise.at%2F&source_ve_path=MjM4NTE&feature=emb_title

For inquiries you can contact **info@gesundausderkrise.at**.

Die Gesunde BoXXX / The Healthy BoXXX

Akzente Jugendinfo

Austria

Main goals

The goals of the World Health Organization are encapsulated in the "The Healthy Boxxx" initiative, tailored to foster a responsible and health-oriented lifestyle among young people. Through this initiative, both youths and their mentors can enhance health literacy, specifically designed for professional youth engagement. It stands on two foundational pillars: youth-centric informational resources and a toolkit of methods tailored for open youth engagement. While primarily designed for professional youth work, experience indicates its adaptability for various extracurricular and school-based youth engagement settings.

Target groups

Youth workers and others working with young people as well as young people between the ages of 12 and 20.

Description of Intervention

The Healthy BoXXX, as an information and method box, was designed to make young people more health literate and to give youth workers the tools they need to do so. It is a concrete contribution to the promotion of health literacy in open youth work. The Healthy BoXXX contains information material and easily accessible methods on various health topics, which can be developed and discussed with young people in a low-threshold way - whether in an open company, as part of a health day or a project on health topics. The BoXXX and its content can be used in a variety of ways. The Healthy BoXXX works with a broad concept of health that is based on the rainbow model by Dahlgreen and Whitehead. Individual and social factors are analysed. Physical, social and mental health, as well as the environment and society, all have their place. It should inform about health: Body, psyche and environment, provide methods for discussing health, strengthening the health literacy of youth workers and young people.

"The Healthy Boxxx" is an information and method kit containing materials on a wide range of health topics. The individual elements contain information material and exercises on mental and physical health that are suitable for young people. The box contains a guidance system in the form of a handbook (also online available: [LINK](#)) and method cards (also online available: [LINK](#)). The 'addiction bag' contains information, games and instructions on the subject of smoking and

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☒ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☐ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☒ national
- ☒ regional
- ☒ county-level
- ☐ municipal

alcohol. It consists of 11 methods and sets of information materials that young people can use to deal with the topics of alcohol and nicotine. The 'addiction bag' contains method cards that are structured according to the "inform - experience - reflect" principle.

The "Start Box" contains the manual as a user guide for the Healthy BoXXX and two methods that are ideal as an introduction to the comprehensive topic of health. One exercise is to brainstorm on topics of health and the aim is to make participants understand how their choices influence their own health. The brainstorming session with already printed out cards is designed to foster knowledge but also for participants to come up with their own ideas. The end result is a poster that youngsters can show or even put up in their youth centres. In this way, the poster not only provides knowledge and insights for the participants, but also for the youngsters who visit the youth centres.

The "Fit Box" is dedicated to physical health. It contains eight methods and numerous information products. The following topics are covered: Food and drink, Fitness/Sport/Body, Food supplements, Piercings and tattoos, Environmental aspects of food. In this box, fitness and sport exercises are done without sport equipment. It also tries to tackle common sport and fitness myths. Another method is to cook a healthy meal together and learn how easy it is to prepare a healthy meal. To cook properly, the participants also learn how to buy food that is affordable, healthy and sustainably sourced. In an additional exercise, they also learn what it takes to grow vegetables and to get to know gardening. Participants further learn how to produce energy drinks themselves and gather knowledge on healthy beverages and to reflect on their own consumption. A sugar quiz helps them to think about how much sugar certain drinks contain.

The "Feel Good Box" is dedicated to mental and social health. It contains eleven methods plus supplementary information products and covers the following topics: Self-esteem/awareness, Eating disorders, Feeling good, Smoking, Love and sexuality, Contact points for problems, Stress, Travelling safely on the Internet. It contains an exercise on talking about emotions and feeling them, working on self-worth and acceptance, as well as creative work. They start to think about places where they feel comfortable. When thinking about addictive behaviours, they also reflect on their smoking habits and the costs of it, and health aspects. A sex-quiz will test the participants' knowledge on sexuality and is designed to widen their knowledge. The aim of another method is to discuss and reflect on topics like love, sexuality and contraception. Participants are learning to recognize their own feelings, values and attitudes. In the topic of love and sexuality, they also learn about contraception methods, how to use them and reduce a fear of contact. A "homework" method might be to test out condom sizes and realistically evaluate which size they need and how to use them. Additionally, menstrual hygiene products are also introduced and the aim of this method is to reduce fear of contact and share knowledge among the participants. A menstruation calendar should help them track their cycles.

Since spring 2019, eleven addiction prevention methods have been added to the Healthy BoXXX. The so-called "addiction bag" comes in a jute bag and enables young people to deal with the topics of alcohol and nicotine under the guidance of experts. This box contains a quiz to get started and evaluate the knowledge of the participants. Further, a self-test should evaluate the own consumption and reflect on potential addictions. A "shot estimate" has the goal to reflect on the alcohol percentage of certain beverages. Another activity is designed to get a feeling for nicotine

and cigarettes and how to deal with statistics. Additionally, the participants learn about the emergence of addiction and which phases addicted might go through. The “addiction bag” also contains an enjoyment exercise that should help participants to consciously consume and taste. In the end, they are questioning common clichés to further reflect on what addictions means. The “healthy BoXXX” is colour coded and every information material and method has its own stickers, that further explain on how to use the materials. There are three coloured stickers that tell the user in which box the method of material belongs. Further, there are stickers indicating if the user should put the materials back, take them with them or should copy them for further use. As some information material is there to stay in youth centres. Every method card is numbered in order to find the materials to each method.

The duration is from 2018 and still ongoing.

“The Healthy Boxxx” was created in a one-year participatory process with the target group (young people and youth workers in the city and province of Salzburg), coordinated by akzente Jugendinfo (human resources had to be invested here). The box is made available by youth centres, youth clubs and youth organizations. This also requires human resources to coordinate the reservation of the box.

Comparison Basis

EVI stands for evidence-based information, i.e. high-quality health information that is scientifically sound, assessed for quality and easy to understand.

The initiative was removed because it does not focus in particular on children and young people and its main focus is on preparing people for medical consultations rather than explicitly addressing mental health issues that are critical to young people's wellbeing.

Evaluation of Outcomes

The focal points of “The Healthy Boxxx” were developed in a one-year participatory process with the target group (young people and youth workers in the city and city and province of Salzburg). All methods were tested in advance in several youth centres. This resulted in a pre-evaluation, but a continuous evaluation of the box would be desirable and recommended (it was not possible to find out whether a post-evaluation was/is being carried out). Although one document ([LINK](#)) indicates that qualitative feed- back was obtained from participants during the planning phase of the box, the document does not provide further details on the questions asked or the number of respondents.

The success factors were the participatory approach and the excellent cooperation between akzente Jugendinfo and selected Salzburg youth centres. Important in the survey was the involvement of young people and youth workers from different regions and the testing of the developed methods in advance - as well as the simple formulation of the questions and sufficient time for the interviews. As mentioned above, however, a further evaluation would be desirable in order to find out how the current materials are received. There are no challenges indicated.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

In view of the information provided, the "Healthy BoXXX" is free of charge and can be reserved, collected and returned. There are also additional information and materials available online (handbook [LINK](#) and method cards [LINK](#)). This all points to a scalable model with potential adaptability at various levels. By utilizing digital platforms, the initiative can overcome geographic limitations and reach a larger audience, facilitating its scalability. In addition, the emphasis on low-threshold accessibility through free distribution and reservation options increases adaptability so that the box can be offered in different contexts. Overall, the combination of offline and online resources facilitates scalability while ensuring accessibility, suggesting promising potential for adaptation to different levels.

It is free and can be reserved and checked out (the boxes are on wheels, which also makes it very easy to transport them). It only requires NGOs/initiatives/organizations at some locations that own the box and then someone takes care that reservations are accepted.

Of course, the content must be translated into other languages so that it can be used. However, it is also advisable to do this in Austria with regard to cultural sensitivity. It is also important to find NGOs/initiatives/organizations in other countries as partners who have a broad network and access to the target group, i.e. to select the right NGOs/initiatives/organizations to make the box available.

Additional Information and Conclusions

The "Healthy BoXXX" initiative appears to make a valuable contribution to resilience development. By focusing on promoting healthy lifestyles and providing resources for both physical and mental well-being, the initiative equips individuals, particularly young people, with the tools and knowledge necessary to navigate challenges effectively. The emphasis on accessibility, with free availability and online resources, enhances its reach and impact, potentially bolstering resilience on a broader scale. Additionally, its adaptability and scalability suggest the potential for long-term effectiveness in fostering resilience across diverse contexts.

More information can be found here:

[gesunde-jugendarbeit.at boja.at/nachhaltige-oja](https://www.gesunde-jugendarbeit.at/boja.at/nachhaltige-oja)

https://www.gesunde-jugendarbeit.at/sites/default/files/downloads/2019-11/NEU_Handbuch_Gesunde_Boxxx_2019_Ansicht.pdf

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☐ Stress management and re-generation
- ☒ Exercise/physical activity
- ☒ Nutritional behavior
- ☒ Addictive behavior
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☐ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☐ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

https://www.gesunde-jugendarbeit.at/sites/default/files/downloads/2019-06/0_A6_Methodenkarten_gesamt_Druck_0.pdf

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvUBH78zGHs&embeds_referring_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gesunde-jugendarbeit.at%2F&feature=emb_imp_woyt
(video)

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Die Jugendgesundheitskonferenz / Youth Health Conference

Vienna Health Promotion – WiG, implemented in collaboration with the Institute for Women's and Men's Health / FEM and queraum. cultural and social research

Vienna (represented in 12 Viennese districts), apparently also in Styria

Main goals

The overarching goal of a Youth Health Conference is to strengthen the 'health literacy' of young people. Health literacy refers to an individual's ability to make decisions in daily life that positively affect their own health and the health of others. In addition, the conference aims to empower young people by involving them directly in the creation and implementation of health-promoting projects. This participatory approach not only enhances their understanding of health issues but also fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility towards their well-being. Through collaborative efforts, the initiative seeks to create a supportive community environment where young people can thrive and develop healthy habits that will benefit them throughout their lives. Participating adults benefit as well; teachers, youth workers, and multipliers gain insights into youth health and well-being and are empowered to implement health-promoting activities together. Political decision-makers, such as district leaders or youth representatives, are involved from the beginning as potential enablers. This helps them understand the perspectives and health needs of the youth in their district better.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☒ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☐ national
- ☒ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Target groups

Young people between the ages of 12 and 19 - especially socio-economically disadvantaged young people. Multipliers (managers, employees). Decision-makers / district politicians.

Description of Intervention

The number of young people in Vienna is rising continuously. According to Statistics Austria, one third of children and young people aged 0-15 in Vienna were considered to be at risk of poverty and marginalisation in 2015. Vienna is also the federal state in Austria with the highest proportion of people of foreign origin. Poverty, a low level of education and a migrant background often lead to health inequalities. The data on youth health from the latest HBSC study also shows an urgent need for action with regard to the subjective state of health, the increasing burden of complaints and the low level of health literacy, particularly in relation to mental health problems.

In order to strengthen the health literacy of young people, Vienna Health Promotion (WiG) is organising yearly "Youth Health Conferences" in at least 14 districts of Vienna, in Vienna the conference was held in five districts of Vienna. The Youth Health Conference is Vienna's model for participatory youth health promotion. Schools and institutions that work with young people are invited to participate in the Youth Health Conference. After an informational event in their district, institutions can decide whether to participate. Following this, young people, as experts in their own health, develop their own projects and ideas in workshops. They are supported in this process by their teachers or youth workers. Simultaneously, teachers and youth workers plan and coordinate the public event – the Youth Health Conference – during regular meetings. This conference marks the culmination of the project. Schools and organisations that work with young people are invited to take part in the Youth Health Conference. The organisations in a district can decide to take part after an information event in the district. Girls and boys then develop their own projects and ideas in workshops as experts on their own health. They are supported by their teachers or youth workers. The teachers and youth workers also plan and coordinate the public event - the youth health conference - during regular meetings.

The programme has the following goals:

- to strengthen the health literacy of socio-economically disadvantaged young people between the ages of 12 and 19.
- to raise awareness among young people about the connection between their own well-being and their own living environment. Furthermore, it aims
- to increase knowledge among multipliers and political decision-makers (e.g. youth officers in the districts) with regard to health literacy and health promotion among young people.
- to improve young people's understanding of health and health needs, promote networking and cooperation between the open and school-based youth sector and the municipal setting.

The approach is to contact schools and organisations that work with young people; providing information about the project, a comprehensive monitoring and support services for organisations participating in the youth health conferences, a participatory realisation of one to three workshops with young people in the participating facilities, the presentation of the results at the "Youth Health Conference" event and supporting the organisations in the implementation of further health promotion initiatives. For presentation appointments, it is helpful to bring along documents that give an impression of what a youth health conference might look like. The illustrative film of the "Youth Health Conferences" project can be used to provide a more comprehensive picture of the concept and to motivate participation. The Vienna Health Promotion

website contains descriptions of health-promoting activities that have already been implemented as part of youth health conferences. The photos of the events in the Viennese districts can give an impression of the good atmosphere and the many different ideas and projects. In the "Youth Health Conferences" project in Vienna, three meetings in the form of workshops were held at intervals of around one month before each youth health conference (start workshop, coordination team 1 and coordination team 2). One or two representatives from the individual schools and youth centres took part in each workshop, with some young people also taking part. Other meeting structures and intervals are of course also conceivable for joint planning and coordination. Regular meetings between the same people strengthen the team spirit and the motivation to enjoy the process of implementation together. This creates commitment and promotes sustainable (networking) effects. Ideally, there should be at least four months between the first meeting of the participants and the youth health conference.

Parallel to the meetings to coordinate project activities and event planning (Coordination Team 1 and Coordination Team 2), teachers or youth workers organise workshops with girls and boys in small groups. These health-promoting processes in the participating groups represent the "centrepiece" of the activities surrounding the Youth Health Conference event.

In view of the comprehensive and holistic understanding of health, the topics can be very broad and range from healthy nutrition, sexuality, partnership, self-confidence, reflection on role models to behavioural or substance-related addiction prevention or eating disorders. It is important that the youth workers and teachers let the young people have their say, identify relevant health topics together with the young people and support the young people in finding suitable forms of expression for health topics. The adults support the young people in using creative methods to deal with health issues. For example, the creation of products (cookbooks, videos, photo exhibitions, T-shirts, freecards, songs) or activities such as theatre plays, role plays, group discussions and much more are conceivable. The relevant youth workers and teachers are responsible for organising the workshops with the girls and boys. The working documents "Youth health conferences - information folder for more health literacy" provide orientation and suggestions. However, it is also conceivable to involve experts for support. The main aims of the workshops with young people are to raise awareness of various health issues, strengthen health awareness and health literacy and encourage sustainable, independent health-promoting behaviour among young people. The wishes and needs of the young people involved should be taken seriously and their decisions and creative freedom should be respected. This promotes the empowerment of young people and strengthens their perception of self-efficacy and their own initiative.

Participating institutions receive comprehensive support and resources from the Vienna Health Promotion – WiG. This includes workshops for young people, working materials, coaching sessions, a budget for necessary materials, and much more. The conference itself serves as a platform for the youth to present their projects, share insights, and exchange ideas with peers, educators, and health professionals. It is an opportunity for the community to recognize and celebrate the innovative contributions of its young members towards a healthier future. In order to reach enough participants, possibly also involve (political) decision-makers and win them over to the concerns of

young people, it is very important to publicise the project.

If (political) decision-makers are involved from the outset, it is easier to win over schools and youth centres or other possible partners for the project is easier. It is important to inform all potential participants at an early stage.

The duration of the programme is ongoing since 2012.

The Vienna project provided organizational and content support from a project team.

Comparison Basis

Österreichische Jugendkonferenz / Austrian Youth Conference

The conference, in which young people from all over Austria take part, is about helping to shape politics at a regional, national and European level. There is a different focus every year, but the conference does not focus specifically on the topic of (mental) health, which is why this initiative was decided against.

Evaluation of Outcomes

The evaluation report does not appear to be publicly accessible, therefore the criteria for success are unclear. Quantitative and qualitative methods of empirical social research, including online surveys, participant observation and focus groups.

Prospect Research was commissioned to conduct an external process and outcome evaluation in order to make optimal use of the experience gained from the twelve Vienna Youth Health Conferences. The results of the evaluation confirm the high level of acceptance of the Youth Health Conference format by the participating multipliers and young people. The high level of enthusiasm shown by the young people for the youth-oriented approach to the topic of health and well-being, their repeated requests for a repeat of the Youth Health Conference, and their desire for a sustainable implementation aid prompted us to create a practice-oriented guideline for the independent implementation of Youth Health Conferences.

Reaching out to apprentices and vocational schools has presented significant challenges, as there seems to be a lack of accountability from stakeholders in open youth work. Engaging older youth, particularly those aged 16 and above, proves to be elusive. Meeting the needs of older young people equally well is proving to be a challenge, but: Peer to peer approaches - older young people with younger young people - are helpful. However, there is in general a noticeable absence of young people's participation in the coordination teams of the conference. The results of the evaluation also show that at the time when the conference had to take place online due to Covid19, the results were worse, for example that fewer young people stated that the conference had led them to pay more attention to their health. How exactly these challenges are to be overcome in the future is not entirely clear, it is stated that a strength of the project is the good cooperation at city and district level / use of

synergies. This could help to reach vocational schools, for example.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

The guide to implementing the youth health conference ([LINK](#)) gives a great overview of how the conference can be organized. It shows, for example how important stakeholders can be won over for the implementation of the conference (chapter about “presenting the project and establishing cooperation”, chapter about “information event about the project”) and then how exactly the conference and the workshops that take place beforehand will be implemented (chapter about “meetings to coordinate project activities and event planning”, “health-promoting processes with the young people”, “preparations for a youth health conference”, “holding a youth health conference”). This guide therefore helps with the organization and implementation of the conference in other settings as well, as it provides a step-by-step structure that is really very useful for successfully implementing the conference. The guide shows how relatively easy the conference is to implement and underlines the great scalability potential in other contexts as well.

Teachers, youth workers, and other multipliers collaborate with youths in workshops to develop health ideas and plan the Youth Health Conference. At least one dedicated organizer and financial resources are needed. Tools like the “Youth Health Conferences – Info Folder” and an instructional film offer guidance (www.wig.or.at). Small funds often suffice for youth initiatives, and networking during the conference helps in sharing resources. Also, it is important to promote the project using existing partnerships and structures to engage enough participants and involve decision-makers. Early involvement of decision-makers helps in gaining support from schools and youth centres. Early and clear communication is essential. It is important to inform potential participants months in advance and emphasize the benefits of participation for schools and organizations. No documents in English could be found. It would be important to translate the implementation guide, at least into English, so that the conference can also be implemented in other regional settings. universities and even at the regional or national level.

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☐ Stress management and regeneration
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behavior
- ☐ Addictive behavior
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☐ Social support structures / services
- ☒ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☐ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

Additional Information and Conclusions

The conference format offers an engaging platform for young people to interact with health topics in a youth-friendly manner, fostering a fun and enjoyable approach to the subject. Participants gain valuable insights into health and strengthen their self-confidence. Additionally, institutions benefit from networking opportunities and exchange of ideas. The conference allows for a deeper exploration of health topics already addressed in schools and institutions, while also inspiring the implementation of further health projects. Publicity, validation, and awareness-raising are additional positive outcomes, as participation in the project can be highlighted on institutional websites and social media platforms. Presenting project results within schools or youth facilities can further progress towards creating health-promoting environments. By addressing a wide range of topics, the conference promotes a holistic understanding of health encompassing biological, psychological, and social aspects.

More information can be found here:

https://fem.at/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Jugendgesundheitskonferenzen_Info-Mappe.pdf
(handbook for implementation)

<https://www.wig.or.at/jugendgesundheitskonferenz>

<https://www.facebook.com/jugendgesundheitskonferenz/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCWTwhb_t6I (movie) Katrin Friesenbichler, BA MA

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K€Y-Card

Der Schlüssel zur finanziellen Gesundheit (engl.: Key-Card – The Key to financial health“)-Klartext – Finanzielle Gesundheit

Upper Austria,
Implementation in production schools
(schools for support in achieving individual training maturity)

Main goals

The project focused on reflecting on one's own thoughts, feelings and actions in relation to money and consumption. The aim was to improve the personal situation of young people in terms of their financial, social, physical and mental health. Financial health is seen as a key competence for responsible financial and consumer behaviour and a reduced risk of addiction. The aim was to give young people the opportunity to acquire basic qualifications and social skills to find their way to enter the labour market.

Specific indicators for measuring the developed of financial health were developed: Knowledge, self-worth, relationship building, ability to act, personal responsibility, goal setting, solution and future orientation, optimism. These factors are also aimed at holistic health and are therefore specifically applied in the individual workshop modules. In addition, these factors have a large overlap with the resilience factors, which are essential when it comes to strengthening one's own resilience and finding and maintaining inner balance. The participatory and creative approach in the workshops enables young people to strengthen their personal skills. Self-efficacy is learnt through the ability to change one's own social, economic and psychological circumstances for the better.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☒ Formal education
- ☐ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☐ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☐ national
- ☒ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Target groups

The direct target group are vulnerable young people aged between 15 and 25 who have not completed vocational training, are unemployed and have either dropped out of school or vocational training or have not found a vocational training position after completing their school education. The main aim was to integrate socially marginalised groups and promote personal development.

The teachers/trainers as an indirect target group are involved as multipliers in order to be able to cover this topic and knowledge of financial health and its links to a healthy lifestyle with other young people in a suitable way in future.

Description of Intervention

As a first step of the intervention, the workshop series was designed to be able to realise the workshops on financial health: The development of the workshop modules was in a participatory manner. Therefore, 103 young people were involved through a prior needs assessment and actively provided feedback. As a result to this creation period, a manual on how to implement this workshop series was published. This series of workshops was realised eight times with 7-9 modules. The duration of each module is about 3 hours.

The modules covered the following topics:

- **WS 1: Money & Health:**
This module's goals are to strengthen relationship building, self-esteem and knowledge. It includes -- besides the presentation of general information of the workshop and an introduction round -- information and practical exercises ("money tree", "what keeps you healthy") on the topics of attitudes towards money and its relation to health.
- **WS 2: My money & me:**
The goals of this module are to promote personal responsibility, solution- and future-orientation, the ability to act and knowledge. It includes introductory and explanatory exercises on income and expenditure calculations, keeping a budget book, account histories and an overview of different payment methods.
- **WS 3: Financing & debt:**
The goals are to convey personal responsibility, solution- and future-orientation and knowledge. This module consists of exercises on the causes, development and consequences of debt, as well as the presentation of specific debt stories and guidance on how to realise set plans.
- **WS 4: Food & Drink:**
The contents include a healthy diet, eating motives, spending on food, price comparisons and presentation in advertising, as well as shopping traps. This aims to promote the ability to act and self-esteem.
- **WS 5: Online shopping & gaming:**
This module contains exercises on the topics of motives for gaming, spending on games and setting appropriate limits, as well as shopping motives and trustworthiness of online shops. It aims to strengthen personal responsibility and ability to act
- **WS 6: Mobility & Living:**
This module focuses on housing, the associated costs, affordability (budget planning and household accounts), shared housing, as well as opportunities and risks. In a practical exercise, the participants are encouraged to reflect on their personal budget. This is to promote solution and future-orientation, personal responsibility, relationship building and knowledge.
- **WS 7: Growth & Security:**
This module deals with topics such as the purpose of saving and how it can be successful, presentation of different savings products and insurance products. The objectives are to strengthen the following competences: solution and future orientation, goal setting, optimism, knowledge.
- **2 modules: audio project (Talking about money and On Air)**

The podcast episodes are also shared online on the project website. In the podcast the young

people reflected on their personal money stories and experiences. The topics were: “nothing is free”, “Youth speaks plainly”, “money for all money for nothing”, “visiting the ‘costs-nothing’ car”. These provide other young people with interesting reports from those affected.

After each workshop module, quantitative and qualitative feedback was gathered from the youth, in form of an online-questionnaire and a dialogue.

To ensure the sustainability of the workshops and content, multiplier training courses were held in 2022, and a trainer manual with the key content and exercises was created. This was to enable trainers to conduct the workshops independently in the future and therefore pass on the content on financial health in the long term.

Project implementation time: 1.10.2020-30.6.2022 (project implementation time) All seven workshop-modules need a total of 7 days

- Training of multipliers: 1 day Personnel resources:
- Training and Organisation of courses 40h/week
- Additional administration 3h/week (over 21 months)

Material costs:

- Print of about 250 manuals
- Room for workshops-trainings is needed
- traveling fees should be calculated

Comparison Basis

The social business “THREE COINS” helps increasing people’s financial literacy and develops and implements several financial literacy projects. This includes the project “Money Class”. It provides teachers with a school lesson with integrated practical exercises for their students to enable pupils to successfully get started with the topic of financial education. The workshop covers topics, such as values and attitudes towards money, overview of income and expenditure, components of a budget, and differentiation between needing and wanting regarding (financial) consumption.

Link: <https://www.threecoins.org/> Link to material: https://www.threecoins.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/MoneyClass_Stundenplanung_2022.pdf

This project was excluded because it focuses neither on health nor NEETS but takes a general perspective on financial knowledge as a tool for fostering a self-determined life and social inclusion.

Evaluation of Outcomes

Project implementation:

The workshop series has been developed in an innovative and practical way.

- The multiplier training program is innovative and developed with practical relevance.
- The multipliers can use the materials in their professional practice.
- An exchange of know-how with other debt counselling services is carried out.

- Number of project-specific further training courses.
- The desire to implement the training content is evident among the multipliers and the offers continue to be requested.

Project outcomes:

- The young people are aware of their financial resources and limits and have increased self-confidence as a result.
- The young people see their health literacy strengthened - from a financial and consumer perspective.
- Life skills are strengthened among young people.
- Young people are increasingly able to organize their leisure time with the community in a way that is free of charge.
- Young people are strengthened in their solution-orientation and goal setting.

An external evaluation was commissioned to assess the outcomes of the project. Both a process evaluation and an evaluation of the project outcomes were conducted.

For the evaluation of the outcomes, focus groups with young people and surveys with multipliers were carried out (mixed-methods).

50% of the participants stated that they were able to improve their life skills as a result of the workshop series (mean value greater than or equal to 3; Scale from 1-5: 1: worse, 2: the same, 3: better, 4: much better, 5: very much). The life skills that were tested were: decision making, problem solving, self-awareness, coping with stress, critical thinking and communicating ability. 75% of the young people surveyed stated that they were (highly) satisfied with the workshop series (mean value greater than or equal to 4).

A part of the young people stated that they were able to overcome financial challenges after the workshop series.

All of the multipliers surveyed stated that they could use the handbook and documentation in their professional practice and are keen to use exercises in their professional practice.

The organization of 7-9 appointments with schools proved to be a challenge. For this reason, fewer workshops are planned for workshop series in future: A number of 7 topics needs to be included at least.

The great heterogeneity of the target group in terms of education, language level and motivation were a challenge. In the online workshops, hardware was also a challenging, as not all young people have computers, and the screens were often switched off. To counteract these challenges, clear conditions should be communicated from the outset.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

Adaption to different settings is well feasible. Even though it needs training in advance, comprehensive documentation and manuals are available for the implementation of the workshops.

Manual Link: <https://klartext.at/handbuch/>, in German

Projects like this are promising if they are based on the individual experiences, resources and needs of the target group. Both the needs assessments in advance and the focus groups and feedback following the respective series of workshops have shown to be successful.

Modules can be selected to shorten the implementation time.

Feedback from the young people (what they liked best in the individual workshops):

WS 1: Money & health: Mentimeter/opinion surveys WS 2: My money & me: Payment methods

WS 3: Finances & debts: Debt history (case study), debt development

WS 4: Food & drink: shopping traps

WS 5: Online shopping & gambling: shop or flop (recognising fake shops), setting limits

WS 6: Mobility & living: personal budget (categorisation with play money)

WS 7: Growth & security: Insurance, information on budget counselling

The playful approach using e.g. puzzles (shop or flop) or memory (payment methods) is particularly suitable for this target group, as the sense of achievement is immediate. Frustration can also be prevented by taking the game design into account (no losers). The "hands-on" approach to money (budget division with play money) has proven its worth.

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☐ Stress management and regeneration
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behavior
- ☒ Addictive behavior
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☐ Social support structures / services
- ☐ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☐ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

Additional Information and Conclusions

The project contributes well to resilience development:

Eight factors for financial health were developed (knowledge, self-worth, relationship building, ability to act, personal responsibility, goal setting, solution and future orientation and optimism). These factors have a large overlap with the resilience factors. If the above-mentioned factors are well balanced, they result in stability, new perspectives, creative freedom and enjoyment of life.

Project website: <https://klartext.at/projekte/umgesetzte-projekte/key-card/>

Podcasts produced during the project: <https://klartext.at/podcasts/>

Manual: <https://klartext.at/handbuch/>

KLARTEXT – Finanzielle Gesundheit <https://klartext.at/kontakt/> info@klartext.at

Health with heidenspass

FensterPlatz – Initiative für Arbeitssuchende

Graz, Styria

Main goals

Main goal of the program is to promote equal opportunities for NEETS in access to work and social participation through implementing health-promoting measures as part of a youth employment project and to raise awareness of the issue of health in this context.

Health-promoting measures are jointly developed and embedded in daily working life in order to raise awareness for healthy living conditions among staff and young people, to develop individual and organizational skills in dealing with stress and to provide young people to opportunity to strengthen social ties in their peer group and to feel a sense of belonging in the project. This way Heidenspass seeks to provide solutions for negative health effects of unemployment, which may increase aggression or lethargy and may lead to the experience of a feeling of not being needed. During their employment in Heidenspass young people are give the time and attention they need for orientation. The pedagogical work focuses on motivation and support without any pressure - the young people decide for themselves when the time is right for more commitment to the project.

Target groups

Target groups of the initiative are staff members of the youth employment project Heidenspass and young unemployed people working there (80-100 people each year). These are young people with different cultural and social background between 15 and 25 years, including young people who had been in contact with the penalty system, had lived in facilities of youth welfare or who had to deal with psychosocial challenges, leading to addition and de- pression. These target groups often have loose social support networks. Also due to a bad physical and mental situation their basic working competence might be lower. Often work and its regulations are unknown to them and they have difficulties to deal with the requirements of employment and work.

Description of Intervention

"Health with Heidenspass" is a workplace health promotion programme aimed at both young people taking part in the work integration programme and employees of the Heidenspass employment project. The Heidenspass employment project itself offers hourly activities in the

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☐ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☒ Social services
- ☐ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service

☒ Other, specify: "heidenspass" is a social business offering social, youth work project, aimed at low-threshold employment and labour market access for NEETS

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☐ national
- ☒ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

areas of upcycling, creative product development, sales and social media as well as cooking. In the training kitchen experienced chefs teach the young people how to prepare a fresh vegetarian or vegan menu every day. The young people learn the basics of cooking, but also how to shop wisely and learn about healthy eating.

In general participants work in the programme three times a week and according to their skills. The short-term activities offered by the company are aimed at the professional integration of young people without work or training. Thanks to unbureaucratic, low-threshold access and a work programme adapted to the target group, the young people are well reached in two workshops. The two-year "Healthy with Heidenspass" project aimed to promote equal opportunities for NEETs to access work and society in the long term through the implementation of health-promoting measures and to raise awareness of the issue of health in this context.

The health promotion activities for young people participating in the "Health with Heidenspass" programme consist of various elements aimed at developing skills, building community and involving young people in the health assessment of the situation in the workplace: Capacity building for Heidenspass staff, skills development and capacity building for young people and a workplace assessment. The integration of these three elements ensures the transfer of knowledge and the development of sustainable structures for (mental) health promotion.

The first core element of the health promotion program was the involvement of young people in the assessment of the working situation. With the assessment of the workplace situation information on the framework conditions that support (mentally) healthy living and the identification of elements that make a healthy lifestyle more difficult, could be collected.

Participants were involved in setting up a systematic survey on ergonomics at the workstations as well as survey of health, exercise and language needs of young people. Involving young people in the development of the survey increased the response rate and supported needs-based planning. The first survey focused also on ergonomics at the workplace.

In addition, the young people were invited to reflect on their workplace situation, using photo Voice: They capture snapshots of places and things they liked or disliked at their workplace and to reflect to reflect how things they liked could be improved and things they disliked could be changed.

The second core element of the programme was community building and skills development workshops. The topics of these workshops can be chosen according to the interests of the young people participating in the programme.

Some examples of workshops that have been held as part of the health promotion program at Heidenspass are:

1. Group activities and community-building events such as yoga, soccer training, music and cooking workshops on a weekly basis.
2. The community-building activities are offered at Heidenspass during working hours. This is crucial for the success of the program, as it is the only way to ensure that the young people regularly take part in the group activities. These workshops offer the opportunity to exchange ideas with each other, form networks and thus get to know the workplace and

work routines better overall.

3. By integrating cooking activities into the work program, the young people also gain access to healthy food, learn to eat healthily themselves and have the opportunity to eat a free, healthy meal after work. This is particularly relevant for the target group, many of whom live in precarious situations.
4. Another project that was implemented during the Geusnheitsförderungsprojekta was the magazine entitled "augenhöhe - heiden-spass", which was developed together with students. The collaboration between the participants, who often live in precarious circumstances, and students promoted social
5. participation and exchange with peers who have a different social background. The experience of working together on the magazine helped with social integration and also strengthened the students' commitment.

Additional workshops on selected mental health promotion topics were offered as part of the workplace health promotion programme:

1. As young people in precarious situations often have a disturbed perception of their body, emotions and perceptions, workshops were offered on sexual education and body concepts, senses and emotions. The workshop critically reflected on gender roles, media (beauty) ideals, role expectations and taboos.
2. Social media and media skills were also the focus of an in-depth series of workshops.
3. In addition, closed group training was offered to promote self-awareness and the ability to regulate emotions. Interested participants had to register for these closed groups after an initial workshop. A total of 8 sessions of 6 hours each were offered. In these workshops, elements of evidence-based life skills programmes were taken up and implemented with the young people.

The third element of the programme was promotional activities aimed at the staff at Heidenspass:

The permanent staff at Heidenspass were invited to complete a health survey, including information on the skills and languages they needed to work with the young people at Heidenspass. The assessment followed the Tema Management profile concept. It is designed to help identify and strengthen individual preferences and skills in the team. Work preferences are explored in terms of the following criteria:

- How does a person prefer to interact with others?
- How does a person gather and use information?
- How does a person make decisions?
- How does a person organize themselves and others?

The Personal Team Management Profile highlights a person's main work preference and two related work preferences, including information on individual and leadership strengths, decision-making skills, social skills, team building and essential information for individual and team development. The information supports communication within the team and with the young people. In addition, regular health circles were set up for the staff. Special emphasis was placed on burnout prevention workshops and team development workshops. In addition, workshops on radicalisation and mental health promotion were offered to develop staff skills.

A series of different offers in an existing setting is implemented as participants change frequently.

Personnel resources: About 25/h a week per trainer (2 Trainers)

Material costs: Additional workshops according to the interests and needs of young people

Comparison Basis

The project builds on the experience of the pilot project "Health4you" implemented by the Eggenburg Apprenticeship Foundation. During the Project numerous activities were carried out to promote awareness and resilience among young people and the core staff, such as workshops on the topic "Acceptance and self-control", "Shaping relationships and the future", "Solution orientation and taking responsibility" in combination with nutrition, body and health, sex education and addiction prevention. In addition, numerous outdoor activities (trips, excursions, sports days, etc.) offered during spacetime took place, which enabled joint activities and exercise. The Project Health4You(th) was implemented earlier and serves as a good practice example for Heidenspass. It also provides a guideline on "lessons learned", which were used when setting up the project in the context of Heidenspass.

Evaluation of Outcomes

- Job Placement after participation in the program
- Skills development (emotional, social and language skills)
- Strengthening the social network of NEETS
- Better working conditions due to an improved cooperation among young people

Methodology: Qualitative interviews with participants of the project, Feedback and peer group reflections during the implementation of the project

50-60% of the young people participating in the program could be placed in training or a job after they completed their work in the employment project Heidenspass. A particularly important element of the learning process was to give young people the chance to live through the entire production process and the challenge of persevering from start to finish in order to experience the satisfaction of the self-created product.

The young people were supported in working together and learned from each other, which supported an attitude of respect and tolerance towards others. The experience of meaningful employment in an appreciative, respectful

working environment providing individual solutions had a great effect on the subjective well-being of the participants. Personal development of young people and their self-esteem were promoted by treating them as equals. These impact factors of experiencing meaningful employment were further strengthened through the structured health-promoting measures in the employment setting. The activities during the project significantly strengthened the social ties in the peer group and enabled a greater sense of belonging to the work program. As a result, cooperation within the employment project improved. In feedback rounds (group and individual settings), the young employees also reported an increase in their individual skills in dealing with stress and stressful situations.

Especially valuable for the young people was the workshop on self regulation. The closed group setting made it very easy for the young people to gain confidence in the group and open up. Participants feed- backed that they experienced a protected space for the first time, for example to reflect on themselves and their role in their peer group, during the longterm-workshops.

The originally planned activities with parents were abandoned. Also, it was also not possible to establish a youth representative body due to the fluctuation in the main target group. Interactive activities (language café, workshops with a high proportion of small group activities) were best received by the young people. Also, their participation in the design of activities was crucial for their motivation.

Voluntary offer outside of working hours quickly turned out to be too high-threshold and therefore would not have promoted equal health opportunities. Non the less, the language café and German course, were well attended despite being held in the afternoon.

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and regeneration
- ☒ Exercise/physical activity
- ☒ Nutritional behavior
- ☒ Addictive behavior
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☒ Personal social networks
- ☐ Empowerment/participation
- ☐ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

(Up)Scalability and allocation

The project itself is an adaptation of Health4You(th) addressing socially disadvantaged young people in inter-company apprenticeships. The low-threshold access in the case of Heidenspass for NEETS was reached due to the implementation in the setting of a youth work program. As it consists of a series of different workshops and a structured assessment of the working conditions, it can easily be adapted in other workprogramms and enterprises.

There is no handbook available for the implementation– yet, the program is based on the evaluated project Helath4you(th), which gives recommendations of the topics to be addressed (i.e. psycho-

logical wellbeing) and provides Tools that can be helpful to assess the working situation of young people.

Additional Information and Conclusions

The project contributes to the overall wellbeing of young people and improves their employability by familiarizing them with the requirements and benefits of an appreciative working environment that structures everyday life and provides social support and a peer network.

More information can found here:

Findings and Tools provided by the project Health4You(th): <https://fgoe.org/projekt/health4youth>

Final report on the project results: <https://fgoe.org/sites/fgoe.org/files/project-attachments/FG%C3%96-endbericht-web.pdf>

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O.P.E.N

Karl Landsteiner Privatuniversität, LBG, Samara, Poika, Innocence in danger, Landeskliniken-Holding NÖ. Österreichische Liga für Kinder und Jugendgesundheit, NOEGUS, Safersurfing, AKMÖ, Kinder-netzwerk.at, ecapt

Lower Austria

Main goals

The project "Online Peer Encouragement Network (O.P.E.N.)" offers peer-to-peer support around mental wellbeing on an online platform (<https://open2chat.at/>). OPEN2chat is not a counseling tool per se, but rather a stigma-free space for exchange with the possibility for young people to articulate their concerns, share opinions and experiences with a peer, and subsequently open up to the idea of professional counseling or therapy if needed.

The overarching aim of the project is to support young people in times of change and difficulty and to encourage young people to talk about psychosocial problems in a way that is appropriate for the target group. Peer support strengthens solidarity and social cohesion among them. By building good peer relationships re- sources of young people to better cope with mental stress, should be strengthened. The aim is to opened up the digital space as a space for building peer-relationships and offering support. Peer- support opens up ways to find coping strategies and is intended to contributing to destigmatization of psychosocial problems by opening the debate.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☐ Non-formal education
- ☒ Healthcare
- ☒ Social services
- ☐ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☐ national
- ☒ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Target groups

Youth aged between 16 and 21 years who are willing to support their peers.
Young people above 14 years seeking for help with mental stress and psychological problems.
Especially "invisible" young people, such as children, whose parents suffer from a mental illness and who might experience stigmatization, should be addressed.

Description of Intervention

open2chat.at is a free, anonymous, online support service by young people for young people. It

does not replace psychotherapeutic or medical treatment. Young people who access the platform for the first time are also informed about contact points and emergency hotlines that they can call in the event of an acute crisis. It offers young people an opportunity to talk and discuss sensitive issues that concern them in a safe environment with people of the same age. Possible topics include bullying, friends, anxiety, family problems, mental health problems and stress.

OPEN2chat is a web-based application for young people that provides peer-to-peer counselling and social support. It provides low-threshold access to online peer support for young people aged 14-21. In order to reach vulnerable young people who may find it difficult to seek support, low-threshold access is ensured. The service can be used by young people seeking support without restrictions (with the exception of age).

The platform was co-developed by young people. The direct involvement of the target group in the development of the platform ensured that the application meets the needs of the users. Young people and developers analysed the changing communication behaviour of young people in the digital age and responded to the new needs of young people by developing the online chat platform. The experience of the co-development showed that the digital space is an important communication area for young people and also a safe space for some of them to deal with "real world problems". The Open2chat service aims to overcome the barriers that exist when young people contact purely professional services or use traditional helplines, as sensitive issues can be addressed easily, anonymously and confidentially.

To ensure attractiveness to the target group and to present the service in a familiar format to young people, OPEN2chat visually corresponds to a chat tool (such as SMS, WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger). It offers standard digital communication tools such as emoticons.

At the same time, the communicative synchronicity often associated with a chat service is deliberately not provided in OPEN2chat. Peer facilitators are required to respond to a message within 72 hours at the latest. On the one hand, this is to avoid overburdening the peer facilitators and to give them the opportunity to check with professionals if necessary. On the other hand, asynchrony also encourages the peers asking for help to think about what they want to chat about. Therefore, OPEN2chat can be used either in an a-synchronous e-mail or in a classic synchronous chat function.

The peers who provide support are young people between the ages of 16 and 21. They are trained by professionals during two weekend workshops and linked to a professional support network. The training for peer supporters includes general information on mental health and mental illness, information on verbal tools, techniques for online counselling and advice on how to deal with any psychological stress that may arise during the counselling process. Peers who respond to requests are also supervised on an ongoing basis to ensure their own wellbeing and the safety of those seeking help. Young people seeking advice or peer contact can be between the ages of 14 and 21. They can use the platform to contact their peers anonymously and free of charge. On the platform, those seeking advice are matched with a suitable peer companion. Peers are selected according to their main topics and areas of interest. Young people who ask for help can also stay with their peer companion for a longer period of time. This allows support processes to take longer. A relationship of trust can be built up between the young people providing support and those seeking it.

Peer Mentors have a one-week training and need to be willing to participate in ongoing supervisions and to meet regularly. Those seeking for help can use the contact to their peer mentor ongoing. Peer mentors are young people that lived a challenging situation themselves and wish to support others. Professional trainers such as psychiatrists and psychotherapeutic medicine are needed for the training of peers, for intervention in critical situations and for providing ongoing supervision for the peers. Training lasts one week.

Comparison Basis

Similar offers are “Youth-Life-Line” and „U25” implemented in Germany. In Austria Erste Hilfe für die Seele Teens (first help for the soul) can be seen as a comparable concept, regarding the peer-to peer advice. In a group of around 15 to 25 participants, teens between 15 and 18 years learn about a 5-step HELP plan and find out which counseling services are available in their area. The workshop, which takes place on 2 dates, is accompanied by professional trainers and an adult person of trust who will continue to be available as a contact person afterwards. This can be a teacher, but also a school psychologist, the school doctor or a youth coach. Young people discuss during the workshop what mental health means to them, how they can recognize a mental health problem and what they can do to help. A peer-to-peer principle like OPEN is followed by “Time 4 Friends”, an initiative of the Austrian Youth Red Cross, which offers young people offers young people the opportunity to communicate with specially trained young people via WhatsApp chats. In contrast to “Time 4 Friends”, however, OPEN provides for young people to be matched with a suitable peer companion.

The prevention program started only recently. By now we do not know much about the outcome. The program “first help for the soul” is evidence based. The prevention program was originally designed for adults working with children, but is now adapted for peers.

More information: <https://www.promentejugend.at/erste-hilfe-fuer-die-seele/>

Evaluation of Outcomes

If peer-supporters have sustainable support services available, they benefit from the experiences gained during their counseling activities. Taking up the success criteria of “Youth Life” which resembles the Platform 82% of former peer facilitators state that they can recognize and deal with their crises, 60% accept help from professionals. In total 96% think they can also support other people privately under challenging situations; a similar picture

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and re-generation
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behavior
- ☐ Addictive behavior
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☐ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/ participation
- ☒ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

emerges concerning education and professional life. One reason for these high values can be seen in the positive experience resulting from the analogous relationship between help-seeker and counselor, which stimulates spontaneous self-reflection, trust-building, and self-identification.

Peer facilitators were actively involved in evaluating and testing the Tools developed. Each group participated in two online sessions, with 2 weeks testing the online application in between. The first session consisted of presenting the tool. It defined pairs of facilitators that alternated the role of test facilitator and test peers (i.e., the person who seeks help). Individuals stayed in one role for 1 week. After the test phase, a group discussion took place. Each session had two or three moderators with one designated discussion leader. Session duration was between 60 and 120 min and followed a predefined interview guideline. This guideline included questions on technical aspects of the communication and questions about the communication process and the individual experiences of each test peer facilitator. Answers were clustered. The main concepts discussed were responsibility (Content of messages: understanding and knowledge, effects of messages: advice and boundaries, external support and training: with content, with communication, emotions: excitement, anxieties), Interaction with Peers (Anonymity, offline/online, metalinguistic remarks), and time management: asynchrony and number of peers)

For peer facilitators: improving social skills, the positive feeling of supporting other young people, free

intervention. Effects of similar interventions have been shown for the reduction of anxiety symptoms but not for depression (Ellis et al. 2011)

Challenges reported when implementing the online platform were language barriers for non-German speaking Youth seeking for advice, as until now multilingual peer advisors could not be reached.

Similar projects, like “U25” (Elgi 2025) have also shown, that the confrontation of peer supporters with their own limited ability to act might be challenging. Users that do not answer to advice given is described as particularly frustrating for those giving advice. Also, difficulties of peers in experiencing their empathy as limited in some cases, for example when topics trigger adverse emotions in the peer supporters, or when they do not find a typical “wavelength” with those seeking advice, were reported. Therefore, peers and youth seeking for health are matched.

The online environment and the resulting anonymity can heighten the anxiety for those giving advice, though it also bears advantages such as having time to think about an appropriate reply. The stress related to writing the first message and the responsibility of helping another person with their problems may be reduced if new peer facilitators get more intense help from a supervisor during their first peer interaction. These problems, which are directly related to the counselling process, mean that peer facilitators must draw on a range of coping strategies.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

As OPEN2chat is an online platform it can be easily accessed from different places. Yet, peers giving advice need to have training and support.

The resources that are required for implementation are:

- An online Platform
- Resources for recruiting Peers
- Permanent supervision for peers
- Training for peers

Additional Information and Conclusions

Open2chat offers a low-threshold peer-to-peer based support. With the platform young people can be provided with support where they like to be in everyday life: in digital spaces and among other young people. Based on the continuing high use of digital media among young people and the preventative effect of social contact, especially with peers, OPEN was designed as an online platform through which young “peers” between the ages of 14 and 21 can make contact with young “peer mentors” between the ages of 16 and 21 and discuss their problems.

The possibility of anonymous use reduces the stigma that is often associated with the use of counseling services for mental health problems. The program has had a positive impact on both peer counsellors and those seeking advice. Anxiety and stress symptoms of peers asking for advice have been proven to be reduced. Counselors report an increase in social and emotional skills as well as coping strategies. They know how to react when dealing with mental stress (also of other people) and they know the most important professional support structures to which they can refer if necessary.

Research on OPEN2chat:

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Further references:

- Egli N. Herausforderungen von Peer-Beratenden in der Online-Suizidprävention. Ergebnisse einer qualitativen Forschungsarbeit über die Beratungstätigkeit bei [U25]. *E-Beratungsjournal*. (2015) 11:24–35.
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behavioral therapy program and an online support group for depression and anxiety. J Cyber Ther Rehabil 2011;4(4):461-467.

<https://dot.lbg.ac.at/mitmachen/open/>; open.office@kl.ac.at

GoBIG & GoBIG2.0

Jugendinitiative Triestingtal

Lower Austria, district Baden

Main goals

GOBIG aims to strengthen the health literacy and health competence of disadvantaged young people and significantly improve their life satisfaction, their "well-being" and mental health. GOBIG takes place in the setting of out-of-school youth work, which is characterized by reaching young people who are particularly difficult to reach with needs-oriented approaches and relationship work with the social workers

The Main goals of the interventions are:

- Participants demonstrate increased health literacy to make decisions that contribute to maintaining or improving their quality of life and (mental) health.
- Participants are strengthening their health literacy and health behavior.
- Participants can recognize and reflect on their own health-threatening behaviors, social and personal (action) skills, as well as experience an expansion of these in dealing with psychosocial stress.
- Participants are more able to deal with conflicts, have increased resilience and have improved their personal skills.
- Participants are strengthened in such a way that they are better placed in or can participate in training measures or labor market policy support measures (mandatory training until the age of 18).
- Participants are able to find a safe place for counselling and can work with the counsellors to improve their situation. They find the right Support in mental health crisis before the manifestation of mental illness.
- The project also aims to promote equal opportunities for all young people, regardless of their education, gender, national origin, or gender identity.
- Further objectives are the promotion of health-promoting settings in regional open youth work and the development of health-promoting living environments in the social environment of young people. The aim is not only to raise awareness of the needs of young people in the population and local politics, but also to promote the necessary structural changes and framework conditions at local and regional level for future measures to promote health and in particular mental health.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☐ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☐ national
- ☒ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Target groups

Socio-economically disadvantaged young people aged 10 to 23, both with and without migration backgrounds, face numerous challenges. Reached primarily through low-threshold youth work programs, they experience social exclusion, health inequalities, and the risk of becoming NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). These youths are characterized by low health literacy, multiple psychosocial problems, and limited support networks. Common issues include low problem-solving skills, resilience, frustration and stress tolerance, depressive moods, poor body awareness, and inadequate coping mechanisms for stress and future fears. They also lack prospects, social support, and often struggle with substance abuse.

Financial constraints and prejudices against psychological counselling further limit their access to paid support programs. They frequently have lower educational qualifications and face difficulties transitioning from school to work, exacerbating their financial struggles and undermining self-efficacy. Additionally, they often have trouble organizing daily life and finding meaningful leisure activities. Their parents typically share similar disadvantages, with lower educational qualifications and socio-economic challenges. Social inequality and economic hardship significantly impact mental health, and these young people are often unheard in their social environments and excluded from developing psychosocial services, including community and political involvement.

Description of Intervention

The activities and methods were created to help underprivileged young people easily access and improve their health literacy, mainly focusing on mental health and to promote equal opportunities for this group within the region. They aimed to engage and involve the target group in discussions and provide them with varying levels of information. The young people's knowledge and needs were considered right from the start of the project.

The activities were tailored to the needs of the target group and covered 6 different health topics in depth over an extended period. These topics included mental health, addiction and violence prevention (with workshops on self-esteem, conflict management, boundaries, civil courage, and discrimination), sexual health, health system/medicine/psychosocial support services, exercise, and nutrition.

The topics were divided into focus months and action days/weeks. The purpose of the action days and workshops was to start discussions with the young people on these 6 topics and to identify other important areas. In total, 76 action workshops were held directly in the young people's living environments, such as the skate park, train station, park, and youth centers, providing easy access, enjoyable introductions, and opportunities for discussions and reflections. The selected methods considered the diverse nature of the youth groups.

Two workshops per key topic were conducted in a gender-specific setting to cater to the different needs and to provide a safe space for dialogue. Creative workshops, such as painting, graffiti, self-defense, dancing, horse riding, writing, photography, and archery, were also conducted to strengthen young people's resources and teach self-expression techniques. These activities helped to engage young people who may have otherwise avoided traditional programs or were difficult to reach.

The action weeks were followed by in-depth workshops that covered topics selected by young people. A total of 88 needs-oriented workshops took place during the action weeks, addressing

subjects such as sexual health, stress, addiction, dealing with aggression and violence, risks, and resilience. These workshops reached 2,478 young people, with 920 females and 1,558 males in attendance. Additionally, project modules focusing on exercise and nutrition were incorporated into year-round weekly programs. This decision was influenced by past experiences demonstrating that regular offerings provide easy access to health-related topics and widen participation opportunities.

The nutrition module was part of a weekly gardening project involving young people with NEETs status, in cooperation with youth coaches and other "NEBA" programs. A nutritionist conducted cooking workshops, and the young people planted a vegetable garden, cooked together, and had time to talk voluntarily and confidentially about mental health topics with social workers.

The project also enhanced self-efficacy and the ability to take action. Young people felt a sense of community, were appreciated, and their self-esteem and self-confidence were significantly boosted in the group settings during activities such as cooking and organizing events.

The weekly sports program focused on improving body awareness and perception, as well as dealing with frustration and inner tensions. The program plenty of freedom, while also including targeted activities related to aggression and body awareness. Additionally, participants had the opportunity to organize sports events for others in public spaces.

The project also considered the well-being of young people in rural and regional settings. By using the "Photo Voice" method, a well-being map of the region was jointly created. A writing and photo workshop allowed exploring the own well-being in the region and producing the book "We. Home. Well-being. and more". A youth dialogue event with regional politicians provided a platform to discuss the well-being map and youth expressions with local politicians, marking an important starting point for the next phase of the project, Gobig2.0. Jukebox: GoBIG! | OKTO

Important interim measures of the first period:

1. Advanced training of the social workers
2. Organizational development within the health literacy field
3. Parents evenings regarding the project.
4. Establishment of a youth council network and rising awareness of (mental)health topics of young people
5. Exchange with youth organizations regarding health promotion

The first youth health conference in the district of Baden took place at the end of the year. On the first day, there were school workshops and afternoon sessions on various topics that were chosen by young people. The second day was for adult participants and focused on ensuring the sustainability of the project.

For the 2022-2023 phase, the project incorporated successful elements from the previous phase and introduced new priorities. There was a stronger emphasis on mental health through resilience dialogues and counseling. It was also recognized that additional counseling options need to be made available due to the high level of psychosocial stress experienced by the young people. Furthermore, a new action plan was developed through active participation, aiming to guide health promotion measures in the up-coming years.

Basic activities (level 1):

- Regular activities in safe-spaces for girls, boys and LGBTQ+,
- The health topics were not predetermined this time, but were selected in an even more participatory manner with the participants.
- Weekly sports programs, which could once again be co-designed
- Interactive leisure activities, trips, and excursions. Excursions and joint activities should offer access to new health-promoting leisure activities and an alternative to high media usage. They were also important for experiencing community. They often provided the basis for further intensive one-to-one discussions

Behavioural prevention offers (level 2)

- 26 Needs-orientated workshops in youth centers and schools with the focus on mental health, identity and prejudice, racism, violence, gender roles and sexuality.
- 84 Counselling/resilience talks by appointment, 5 parent cafés
- 10 Youth hearings - lobby work and participation
- 3 Meeting zones in the region
- 10 Podcasts

Activities related to the living environment (level 3)

- Process-orientated creation of the "Health " action plan.
 - Community-oriented work - networking youth, health and migration councilors
 - Peer education, role models
- Following interventions are described in more detail:

Youth hearings: The youth hearings were organized in collaboration with young people to facilitate a constructive dialogue between them and local politicians. These moderated meetings focused on youth participation and their concerns to foster a positive outlook on the future and promote a "healthy up- bringing" in the municipality/region. The goal was to improve the well-being and self-efficacy of young people and initiate sustainable changes in the municipalities by addressing their needs. The aim was to draw attention to mental health and highlight the concerns and ideas of young people.

Podcasts: Another initiative involved creating a podcast in collaboration with young people, giving them a platform to voice their issues. A total of 10 podcast episodes were recorded and published on various platforms titled as "Jugendsphären." The topics were chosen by young people, and they were supported and guided by staff members. The podcast aimed to amplify voices of young people and raise awareness of their issues among both their peers and adults. Additionally, they contributed to boosting young people's self-esteem.

Peer education: The goal was to support the long-term success of the project and to promote thinking about health-promoting structures in youth work. The focus was a collaborative outdoor experiential education weekend with peers who volunteer with younger individuals. Topics focused on intoxication and risk management. During the event, participants reflected on their own behaviour and discussed different approaches. Additionally, a toolkit of methods was created that can offer ongoing support in everyday life. The toolkit is available for free borrowing.

283 Counselling contacts and 81 Counselling appointment/resilience talks

Numerous counselling sessions occurred in safe and regular spaces, leading to more intense one-on-one appointments. Counselling sessions became more intense as the project progressed. They provided support to young people in mental health crises and helped to

overcome challenges before mental illnesses manifest. For many participants, this was their first experience with counselling. The established relationship, confidentiality, and easy access supported the counselling sessions. The topics covered in counseling and resilience talks were wide-ranging, including dealing with emotions, various forms of violence, feeling disoriented, overwhelmed by life situations, inability to handle problems, fears, academic and vocational pressures, family conflicts, poverty, loneliness, and addiction. The Health Action Plan for (mental) health-promoting measures for young.

The action plan is aimed at:

- Decision-makers in the region who can contribute to the implementation of the measures,
- The primary dialogue group of young people, who are supported and empowered within the scope of their possibilities to influence their own health behaviour as well as the design of their living environment.
- Parents who have contributed to the action plan and contributed ideas.

The 390 participants took part in 22 participatory measures. The population consisted of 132 adults (34%) and 258 young people (66%).

The current situation was analysed, and recommended measures were developed considering the input of young people, local councillors, and parents. These recommendations were then further refined in a workshop and the public discussion with young people and adults.

During the discussion, Herbert Wojta-Stremayr, the program manager of "Healthy Community" Lower Austria, was present and he congratulated the project's success. He stated, "The GoBIG2.0 project is a best practice project for the participatory involvement of young people and groups who are otherwise difficult to reach in health promotion projects!"

Duration and timing of the program: 2019- 2021 & 2022- 2023

Resources utilised: ~ 400.000 Euro, 6 part-time social workers, extern experts for example: Nutritional counselling, Violence prevention trainer

Comparison Basis

The project "rund um xund - Chancengerechtigkeit und Gesundheit" (all about xund - equal opportunities and health) was implemented in open youth work in Vorarlberg and was aiming at young people from contexts that have little access to health promotion programs and are exposed to particular health risks. The "rund um xund" project was able to achieve the goal of addressing and supporting young people from educationally and socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds who tend to have low health literacy and increased health risks. The project focused on nutrition and a wide range of cooking activities. In addition, a garden was also cultivated, places of well-being were developed with young people, sports activities were organized and workshops with youth groups on the topic of psychosocial health - social competence - life skills took place.

In addition to that gender-sensitive work was a part of the project and also the focus of increasing the health literacy within young people were recognized as experts in their own world and were able to participate in the project organization. 2016_12_OJAD_Rund um xund_Endbericht mit Fotos komprimiert (fgoe.org)

The "rund um Xund" project and its experiences served as the basis for the preparation of GoBIG. It was a good practice project for a health promotion project that takes place in a low-threshold setting. Many positive aspects and also the accessibility of disadvantaged young people, also young people with NETT status, could be involved in this project from Vorarlberg. The project was not selected because GoBIG placed an increased focus on psychosocial health in the second phase of the project and also provided services in the street work setting, thus reaching young people who do not attend a local facility.

Evaluation of Outcomes

In total, 8247 contacts were made through the project. Compared to the planned contacts of 4488, this is almost double the number of people reached by the project.

Participants

- demonstrated increased health literacy to make decisions that contribute to maintaining or improving their quality of life and (mental) health.
- can recognize and reflect on their own health-threatening behaviour and social and personal (action) skills and experience an expansion of these in dealing with psychosocial stress.
- are more able to deal with conflicts, have increased resilience and have improved their personal skills
- are strengthened in such a way that they are better placed in or can participate in training measures or labour market policy support measures (mandatory training until the age of 18).
- are more able find the right Support in mental health crisis
- The project also aims to promote equal opportunities for all young people, regardless of their education, gender, national origin or gender identity.
- Further objectives are the promotion of health-promoting settings in regional open youth work and the development of health-promoting living environments in the social environment and communities of young people.

The project was evaluated by the FH Burgenland university of applied Science. Mixed Qualitative methods:

- Problem-centered interviews
- Observation

The data material obtained was analysed according to the guidelines of the qualitative research method of Grounded Theory. The 2nd project phase was not externally evaluated. However, there was a regular exchange between the participants during all offers and workshops and the direct feedback and the results of the group reflections were also incorporated into improvements and adaptations of the project process. In addition, the project team was supervised, meetings and risk management analyses were held, and a monthly controlling team was set up. The project was also evaluated using a standardized questionnaire from the Federal Chancellery. Here, however, only the good acceptance of the project was evaluated and not the effect on the health of the young people.

Some points from the evaluation report of FH Eisenstadt:

Regarding the achievement of objectives, it can be stated that the health of young people can be strengthened through the project. It should be noted that the young people are given a broader definition of health promotion that goes beyond sport or healthy eating, and also includes the psychosocial dimension. This is illustrated by the health-promoting aspects - such as the promotion of social networks in group activities or the integration of the 6 different focal points into the activities. During the activities, conversations arise, for example about their own psychosocial health which were welcome. Regardless of the awareness of the goals or the connection between the activities carried out and the goals and the objectives, the young people benefit both psychosocially and physically just by taking part in the programs. The social workers considered the current needs of the young people during the activities taking place. The biggest challenges at the beginning of the project were the Covid-19 restrictions, putting a high demand on employees' flexibility and adaptability. For example, there were small group programs or online workshops that required more effort.

In addition, there was a lack of sufficient staff, especially in the second project term, and the project team was confronted with staff changes due to a pregnancy, among other things. Furthermore, it was not easy to specifically involve politicians in the project. This required increased effort on the part of the project team and individual discussions with politicians. Overall, despite understaffing, more staff hours were spent on the project than originally planned. This was necessary in order to successfully realize the project goals and tasks.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

Even though the wide range of offers appealed to many young people, a smaller selection of offers and more in-depth interventions on specific psychosocial health topics would be useful. In addition, a project budget for municipalities would be useful to make it easier to implement the ideas developed in the action plan in the area of mental health.

Sufficient human resources are needed to implement the project in addition to the basic street work. In addition, it makes sense to have a project budget available for activities within the municipalities in order to strengthen sustainable initiatives in the municipalities. It is also important to provide employees with further training and to consciously anchor health promotion in the company in the long term.

In addition, a longer project duration is important for individual measures in order to reach young people well, build relationships and be able to work specifically on mental health issues with them in a participative way.

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and re-generation
- ☒ Exercise/physical activity
- ☒ Nutritional behavior
- ☒ Addictive behavior
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☒ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☒ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

Additional Information and Conclusions

Resilience is the ability to recover from setbacks and deal with challenges. Promoting resilience in young people is particularly important as they are in a phase of life where they are particularly emotionally challenged. The GoBIG project implemented many measures to help young people deal positively with setbacks and challenges and acquire new skills. Strengthening young people's self-confidence, self-awareness and self-assurance are one of the central resilience factors which were also important aims in the project.

Appreciation and acceptance: Young people were valued and accepted as part of the activities, regardless of their achievements.

Trust and a sense of security: The deliberate provision of "safe places" created a strong relationship of trust and a feeling of security for young people to be able to "open up" about problems. Optimism: A positive outlook on life and the encouragement to see the good in difficult situations.

Encouragement to be independent: Young people were encouraged to think and act independently in all project measures. They were empowered to participate, to be heard and to experience self-efficacy.

Positive contact with peers: Good relationships with peers provided support and promoted social skills.

Positive role models were found in the social workers, but also in the exchange with other young people and their challenges.

- [Jugendgesundheitstagung im Bezirk Baden \(padlet.com\)](#)
- https://www.jugendinitiative.at/app/download/36237542/JT_GoBIG_Methodenkoffer.pdf
- <https://www.jugendinitiative.at/projekte/gobig-2-0/podcast-medienworkshops/>
- [Endbericht GoBIG!.pdf \(fgoe.org\)](#)
- https://www.jugendinitiative.at/app/download/36045441/Aktionsplan_GesundheitUndIntegration.pdf
- [Jukebox: GoBIG! | OKTO](#)
- info@jugendinitiative.net

Self♀*value+ Empowering girls and young women

Frauengesundheitszentrum FEM Süd – Klinik Favoriten, Vienna,
Frauengesundheitszentrum FEM – Klinik Floridsdorf, Vienna,
Frauengesundheitszentrum, Graz, FrauenGesundheitsZentrum, Salzburg,
Frauengesundheitszentrum, Linz, PROGES Frauengesundheitszentrum, Wels, Femail,
Feldkirch ♀ Verein Amazone, Bregenz, Aranea Mädchenzentrum, Innsbruck, Verein
Jugend und Kultur, Wiener Neustadt, Feminina, Burgenland, EqualiZ, Klagenfurt

Austria

Main goals

In summary, the central aim of the project is to provide psychosocial support (with and without migration experience, from different families of origin), guidance and counselling for girls and young women aged 12 - 21. In addition to this, multipliers were sensitised through further training on gender-sensitive work with girls. Following aspects were addressed:

- Promotion and stabilization of girls' mental health.
- Support in mental health crises and before the manifestation of mental illnesses.
- Supporting girls to reduce stress and overcome the challenges they face in their lives and challenges they face in their living environment.
- Prevention of eating disorders.
- Teaching (healthy) body awareness.
- Empowerment and strengthening of personalities.
- Improving equal health opportunities for all girls
- Strengthening the health literacy and health behavior (in relation to their own psychosocial health).

Target groups

The target group primarily consists of girls and young women from AusbildungsFit centres (formerly production schools), inter-company apprenticeship centres, street work facilities, youth street work, youth centres, and schools.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many studies have repeatedly noted that women are more affected by the pandemic in terms of their mental health than men. Studies show that stress, anxiety, and depression symptoms, as well as suicidal thoughts or attempts, have increased significantly. Low socio-economic status also increases psychosocial stress and the risk of morbidity while reducing life expectancy. In addition to economic resources, social inequality is also a key factor in the deterioration of mental health

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☐ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☐ national
- ☐ regional
- ☒ county-level
- ☐ municipal

during the pandemic.

The study, conducted by Danube University Krems confirms that "56% of young people suffer from depressive symptoms, half of them suffer from anxiety, a quarter from sleep disorders, and one percent have suicidal thoughts."

Another important finding is the duration of mobile phone use. Half of students spend five or more hours a day on their smartphones, which is a 50% increase since 2018. As daily mobile phone use increases, so does the frequency of psychological complaints. At the same time, physical activity among young people has significantly decreased. (<https://www.donau-uni.ac.at/de/aktuelles/news/2021/16-prozent-der-schuelerinnenhabensuizidalegedanken>)

Description of Intervention

Workshops

Self-esteem workshops with a focus on violence prevention, conflict management, boundaries, crossing boundaries "Sexual health" possible focal points: Basic knowledge about the body and its functions, anatomy of sexual organs, menstrual cycle and menstruation, pregnancy and abortion, sexually transmitted infections, contraception, hormonal and natural contraceptive methods, visits to gynecologists, love, partners and their living environments, sexual orientation, sexual identity, forms of relationships, feelings & emotions, sex, the first time, all subsequent times, media literacy, pornography, sexting, grooming Myths and facts are discussed and clarified.

Self-confidence, self-assertion and self-defense, critical questioning of beauty ideals, sexuality and gender diversity Prevention of violence (digital and analog forms of violence)

- Be worth: full - you come first! Workshop program on the topic of self-esteem with various self-esteem-enhancing and group-strengthening exercises
- Be relaxed instead of burnt out - your stress management and resilience workshop! The focus was on the concepts of stress and resilience as well as solution strategies and techniques.
- Be enlightened - body, kissing and more! Sexuality, contraception, sex education and everything to do with the body and relationships
- Be real - on the trail of your body:image! Workshop program on eating disorder prevention, beauty ideals, body norms and self-esteem
- Be (yourself) safe - Say stop to violence and bullying! Workshop program to raise awareness and prevent violence and bullying All girls and young women who take part in workshops or counseling sessions receive information material and flyers about the project and FGZ Salzburg as well as hygiene articles, condoms and key rings or rebel calendars as goodies from FGZ Salzburg.

Social Media

The Instagram account "selbstwert_plus" is at the heart of the public presence of

selbstwert+. Under the "Good to know" category, all institutions can now pass on information on topics and questions that keep coming up in the workshops and consultations. The "Courage and Myth Monday" was used to explain common myths about gender, sexuality and mental health in the online space and to encourage people at the same time. From the first to the tenth of August 2023, girls and young women on Instagram were "self-esteem+ challenge". There was a self-esteem-boosting task every day, which was photographed by an institution. At the end of the challenge, a video was produced summarizing all the content of the challenge.

Counselling

The average age of girls in counseling sessions was 17. The topics covered were diverse and presented various challenges. On one hand, issues stemming from the pandemic continued to have a significant impact. This included bullying from unvaccinated children whose parents opposed vaccinations, concerns about hygiene and fear of spreading illness, heightened levels of online consumption, as well as persistent feelings of loneliness and powerlessness. Additionally, increased economic pressure on already socio-economically disadvantaged families resulted in heightened conflicts, which became a common theme in counseling sessions.

Girls often felt overwhelmed by their life situations, which was reflected in their struggles with school and education. Finding an identity with a migrant background was also a recurring topic of concern, especially due to worries about potential deportation to their home country. Many pre-existing problems that were exacerbated by the pandemic included difficulties accessing support and psychological counseling, especially given the high costs of private practitioners. For many, the counseling project provided their first entry point into receiving psychological support - they had seldom spoken to anyone about their problems before. The girls expressed immense gratitude for the quick and straightforward help offered by the project.

FEM South - Vienna

The FEM Women's Health Center at the Floridsdorf Clinic provided outreach services for FEM girls. This part of the project depends on strong collaboration with external facilities such as youth centres and training centres. Established partnerships with various youth settings through previous projects, could be utilized for the selbstwert+ project. As a result, three locations from a previous project have been retained, offering fixed consultation hours and counseling services at a) BFI's inter-company apprenticeship training in Vienna's 19th district, b) friends - Kinder, Jugend- und Familienzentrum in Vienna's 2nd district, and c) Nachbarschaftszentrum 6 in Vienna's 6th district. With increased resources, additional locations have been added in 2023. Seestadt Ausbildungsförderung (Sonnenallee 31, 1220 Vienna), e.g., provides support services for teenagers and young adults who have finished compulsory schooling but are not currently in school or employed. Here, young people receive assistance in planning their next steps in education and training, along with the necessary skills for their desired vocational training.

Training courses for multipliers

554 experts and multipliers from girls' and youth work were reached in the 50 trainings and further education courses. The topics of the training courses included:

- Girls & health - mental health
- Self-esteem and sex education, LGBTIQ+
- Girls & health - raising awareness of violence.
- self-worth+ I am worth it to myself (Cyber)mobbing on dealing with different forms of violence online and offline
- Input on eating disorders (too much, too little and still never enough...), beauty ideals Boundaries (sexualized violence)
- Body image and social media
- A strong me for me. Strong against stress Institutions that took part in the training courses included FH Campus Wien (midwifery course students), Kinderfreunde Steiermark - Flexible Hilfen, Ausbildungsfit /Knittelfeld, children'sand Youth Advocacy Office Graz, Alpha Nova Youth 25% 75% 16 coaching, BF

Events

FEM South – Vienna hosted an event for professionals and girls on 22.02.2023. FEM Mädchen Mobil took part in a panel discussion on the topic of "Pandemic-related psychological stress for girls* and young women* and ways of coping".

Self-help group

The support group aimed at helping girls and young women struggling with eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating disorder. The group provided psychosocial counseling and psychotherapy. The support meetings took place at the FGZ Linz, and workshops were also organized at external facilities as needed. Topics discussed in the support group included the relationship between food and addiction, recognizing eating disorders as either a friend or an enemy, identifying contributing factors and mechanisms, understanding thought patterns, self-worth, perfectionism, automatic thoughts, and managing emotions. The main goal of the group was to shift the focus from food to living a fulfilling life.

Public relations work

Public relations were a key part of the project. It was used to reach girls, young women, influencers, and caregivers. Different strategies were used to reach these groups, including the use of Instagram channel "selbstwert_plus" and freecards for girls and young women, and press releases and a folder for influencers and caregivers. Additionally, a website was created for the project: www.selbstwertplus.at

Girls' meeting place/ Girls' Club (e.g., Low Austria – Rumtrieb/Auftrieb)

The inclusion of youth workers created a low-threshold. Initially, the target group, especially girls, was effectively reached through the girls' afternoons. In 2023, the focus shifted to expanding counseling sessions and introducing a new series of workshops. The goal is to offer all services with minimal barriers, as this is crucial in girls' work. The girls' afternoon, launched in 2022, had a successful start and became a monthly event

for the target group. Every month, girls and young women were invited to drop by the youth center between 4 and 6 PM to interact with the project staff or participate in group activities centered on specific topics. The mini-workshops during these afternoons covered the following topics:

- Sexuality
- Mental health
- Self-esteem and boundaries
- Resource work
- Emotions

Creative activities were also organized to teach techniques to help deal with emotions.

The advantage of holding the workshops on the premises of the Amazone association is that girls* and young women* get to know the association more holistically as a contact point and find points of reference to the realities of their lives. In addition, the workshops also made it possible to establish links to the counseling services offered by selbstwert+. The workshops mainly dealt with topics relating to violence prevention (setting boundaries, strengthening self-confidence, self-assertion, civil courage) as well as beauty ideals and body norms, role models, identity and diversity. In line with the aim of strengthening girls* and young women* in their self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-determination. The work focused on raising awareness of gender role models and their effects as well as resource work.

Duration and timing of the program: 01.05.2022-31.12.2024

Resources utilised: With a total budget of €1,800,000 the project can now be implemented throughout Austria from May 1, 2022 to December 31, 2024.

Comparison Basis

The project Mädchen*ZONE (Jugendinitiative) offers a low-threshold access of measures in terms of girl*streetwork, workshops, counselling, girl*cafés and multiplier training for the target group of girls* and young women aged 14+. The focus is on topics such as violence against young women and girls as well as issues of mental health, self-esteem, body image and role models, recognizing and naming one's own boundaries, coming to terms with one's own identity and finding one's own identity, opening up and expanding spaces for encounters and experiences both indoors and in public spaces, supporting and advising affected girls, improving knowledge about support services and victims' rights, increasing civil courage, expanding one's own ability to act.

Another goal, that contributes to the prevention or protection against violence, is the strengthening of mental well-being and health.

Targeted workshops on mental health, which also took place in the school context, counselling opportunities in the Mädchen*Zone and the low-threshold presence for girls* in public spaces as well as in the services, were used to consciously work towards achieving the goal. The success was demonstrated by the girls'* reflection, particularly

regarding dealing with stress, tension, isolation, and conflicts. The girls* dealt openly with their own feelings within the Mädchen*Zone programme. They accepted the offer to talk openly about self-regulation and mental health and independently addressed and demanded aspects of these topics.

The project contained similar components to the Selbstwert+ project and added an additional component with girls' streetwork (248 times)

Other parts of the project were:

- Counselling for girls (102 individual sessions).
- Girls' meeting place.
- 54 Workshops: violence prevention, mental health and self-esteem at the girls' centre and in schools
- Excursions and creative activities to deal with issues and facilitate counselling services.
- Peer education and teacher training.
- Networking and multiplier training.
- Instagram account.
- Online offers during Covid-19.
- Brochure on the topic of violence in relationships and closing event.

The project was successful, but it was excluded because the focus of the project was strongly on violence prevention and the project only ran for one year due to funding framework of the Federal Chancel in one region of lower Austria. In addition, the project was sometimes restricted in the implementation of space-bound offers due to Covid Pandemia. Total number of contacts: 2377 Resilience talks/low-threshold counselling sessions took place in all settings. The girls often preferred counselling sessions as part of the low-threshold services.

Evaluation of Outcomes

The project has been implemented successfully and smoothly since it began in May 2022. Apart from personnel changes, there were no other project deviations and the implementation was according to plan. Some of the target indicators have been achieved or, in some areas, far exceeded.

- 2,000 girls were reached; By the end of 2023 the number increased to 5,667.
- The targeted number of 10,000 contacts was almost reached with the number of 8,150.
- The targeted number of 400 further trainings was already reached by the end of 2023 with 554.
- These figures show the great need for the Selbstwert+ project.

The project team created evaluation forms for counseling sessions and training courses, using QR codes for feedback. However, the response rate was low due to the voluntary nature of the evaluations. The girls' anonymity is crucial, and the team aims to emphasize the importance of feedback while acknowledging the potential hurdles it may present.

In total 456 workshops were held in all federal states. (4260 contacts). 2,315 girls stated that they liked the workshop well and very well (4 and 5 stars). 2,210 girls stated that they felt between good and very good (4 and 5 stars) in the group. 2,195 girls stated that they liked the topics and content well and very well (4 and 5 stars)

Some individual statements:

- „Thank you for the many ideas for increasing self-esteem“
- „Thank you for raising the issue that is normally suppressed“
- „Thank you for taking care of such important issues“
- „Please a workshop about beauty ideals etc.“
- „Very pleasant and invigorating!“
- „Thanks for the content, food for thought!“
- „Very inspiring exercises, exciting content“
- „Stress = great topic, very important. Could have taken even longer. Handout (course materials) would be great“

The number of girls reached shows not only the success and good acceptance of the project, but also the massive suffering of girls and young women. Some of the target indicators have already been achieved or far exceeded in some areas.

A special feature of selbstwert+ is the Austria-wide, low-threshold, participative and the flexible access to girls and young women. A network for girls' health has been created; There was a constant transfer of knowledge with all the participating and the build-up of expertise was ensured.

In public relations work (e.g. Instagram), girls' health could be addressed in a low-threshold and age- appropriate way.

Girls' health could be addressed in a low-threshold and age-appropriate manner, without ever taking on a pointing finger character. As the results and figures show, the demand and the need were very high. This speaks that the project should continue to be implemented even after the project period has ended. All participating organizations are therefore hoping for continued funding.

The main challenges were changes in the project team. Some services were adapted to make them more low-threshold-ish, e.g. a self-defense course or girls' club was installed in Wiener Neustadt in addition to the counselling services.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

In order to strengthen the impact and sustainability of the project, a regular weekly low-threshold offer for girls is recommended if such an offer isn't existing in the region yet.

In this way, girls who find it difficult to make use of counselling services on their own can be reached. In addition, low-threshold services often enable easier and more enjoyable access to counselling and support services. They can help girls to develop strength and self-esteem if services are used over a longer period. However, it can be noted that access via schools, school social work, and vocational training programs are also a good approach. A good positive example is www.amazone.or.at.

It is currently still unclear whether the project will be sustainable after its end and whether it will be possible to continue to promote the program. One possible recommendation could be to involve local decision-makers and politicians more closely to secure or expand the projects in particular Austrian's rural areas.

Additional Information and Conclusions

Resilience is the ability to recover from setbacks and deal with challenges. Promoting resilience in young people is particularly important as they are in a phase of life where they are particularly emotionally challenged. The low-threshold, participative and flexible access to girls and young women and the "safe spaces" help to reach girls and young women who need it most. The various offers in the project, the counselling sessions and the workshops are geared towards reflecting on problems and expanding skills. Girls feel valued and develop a positive way of dealing with problems together with the counsellors. The group settings also support the exchange with other girls.

- <https://www.tips.at/nachrichten/linz/leben/627877-selbstwert-maedchen-und-junge-frauen-strengthen>
- https://www.meinbezirk.at/linz/c-regionauten-community/selbstwert+-maidens-and-young-women-strengthen_a6419441
- The website can be accessed via the following link: www.selbstwertplus.at
- Instagram account "selbstwert_plus"
- PROGES website: www.proges.at/angebote/frauen/frauen-gesundheitszentrum-wels/selbstwert
- eva.trettler@extern.gesundheitsverbund.at

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and regeneration
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behavior
- ☒ Addictive behavior
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☐ Social support structures / services
- ☒ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☒ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

GAAS

Project for the promotion of health literacy tences of young people who are not in education, employment or training - Production school spacelab, Nordrand Mobile youth work /Streetwork, University of Vienna (Department of Nutritional Sciences) Companies

Lower Austria, St. Pölten

Main goals

The project deliberately took place in the setting of open youth work and was honoured with the Vienna health award.

The target group was reached through the low-threshold activities in the young people's living environment. Practical and interactive approaches, e.g. cooking together, are more desired by the young people as "classic educational formats", e.g. lectures. Involved personal must also be chosen carefully since young people reject health professionals from outside and have more trust to reference persons of the participating institutions/organizations. (Davison, et al., 2015)

- The GAAS project targeted several determinants of young people's health: -factors of individual lifestyles: topics of nutrition, exercise and mental health, strengthens health literacy and promotes the health behavior of young people with NEET status.
- Social and community networks: through the integration of social media into the project, especially in the intervention phase, and other media such as okto TV, the project was discussed in the social networks of young people with NEET status.

Living and working conditions: the integration of caregivers into the intervention, the establishment of the Youth Nutrition Mentor course as a multiplier training course improved the living and working conditions of young people with NEET status in the settings of open youth work, production schools, etc. in long terms.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☐ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☐ national
- ☒ regional
- ☐ county-level

Target groups

Primary target group: young people with NEET status = Not in Employment, Education or Training (spacelab production school, Nordrand Mobile Jugendarbeit). Secondary target group: Carers of these young people (production school spacelab, Nordrand Mobile Jugendarbeit) Secondary target group: Participants in the nutrition-specific youth nutrition mentor course (people with basic psychosocial training).

Young people with NEET status often belong to educationally disadvantaged population groups and are more often affected by health inequalities as a result. The group is very heterogeneous.

Davison et al. (2015) showed that the perceptions of healthy eating among NEET young people in the UK are influenced by the following points:

- "Spiral": disadvantageous social and economic living conditions - lack of social support
- substance abuse
- External factors: financial limitations, supposedly inexpensive junk food with comparatively expensive healthier alternatives, oversupply of fast food
- Individual factors: low self-efficacy, lack of ability to make nutritional decisions, limited control over food purchasing, addiction (Davison, et al., 2015).

Young people live in the „here and now“ and are too busy coping with daily life. Thus, they very often do not think about their health future. School-like events, e.g. lectures and competitive situations such as competitions, are rejected.

Description of Intervention

Intervention April 2016 - December 2016: Low threshold interventions: Mental health, exercise, nutrition

Based on questionnaire results an intervention was designed and carried out in participating organizations. Each of five locations was supervised and accompanied by three students from the field nutrition science, dietetics, and physiotherapy. Topics such as drinks, taste training, sport and nutrition, shopping, reading labels, understanding packaging information, sensory training, eating and table culture, the importance of animal foods and health aspects of fast food were the main focus of so called action days. In the second part of the intervention, external experts (psychologists) focusing on mental health were involved. As part of these workshops, topics like beauty, beauty ideals, and feelings in connection with nutrition were addressed in terms of a practical approach via strengthening and resource-oriented exercises. Basically, the action days consisted of practical and joint exercises.

The number of participants on action days exceeded the initial targets of 70 young people and 25 supervisors, respectively. Totally 279 young people and 48 trainers took part in the action days. The intervention was designed based on the needs and wishes of the young people and the locations. In addition, numerous other dissemination activities,

such as radio reports, were created together with the young people as part of the intervention. The main target group had the opportunity to take part in feedback rounds after each action day. Young people and supervisors were asked about the successful and less successful day activities as well as other wishes such as topics, methods, and recipes. The project team incorporated this input into the design of subsequent action days. The feedback rounds were supplemented by further evaluation measures (observations, interviews), in which the main target group was intensively involved.

The feedback on the intervention was extremely positive from both, the young people and their coaches. Joint cooking and eating, the eating and table culture, the “sensory trails” and the exercise units were particularly well received. The young people even expressed their desire to continue the intervention on several occasions. In order to meet this wish, at least to some extent, the carried out practical exercises were collected and summarized in the “GAAS Methods Manual”. The design of this manual was an unplanned project result, but one that supported the sustainability of the intervention.

Intervention March 2016- February 2018: Participatory product development for nutritional competence.

The analysis at the project start showed that energy-dense drinks are an essential part of young people's lifestyles and that the drinking behaviour of young people with NEET status are in need of an improvement. Furthermore, both the young people and their supervisors expressed, during focus groups and additional discussions about the intervention and product, a desire for a drink that includes information on healthy drinking behaviour as a product for nutrition communication, while the example cook-book/calendar presented was rejected. As a result, the topic of drinking behaviour was increasingly developed in the intervention with the young people and the idea of developing a drink as a nutrition communication product was pursued further. The drink conveys nutritional information - similar to a flyer – via infographics in appropriate language using a youth appropriate medium, the bottle. The innovative drink with the name "Frizztea" comes from the lifeworld of young people and the recipe, name and infographic were developed in partnership with the young people involved in the project as part of four workshops.

The drink recipe, the name, and the design of the infographic on the label for healthy drinking behaviour were developed together with the focus target group in several workshops. During the development and design of the product, beverage recipes were evaluated by young people in several tasting sessions using acceptance and preference tests and further improved.

The product allowed involved younger people to take on the role of multipliers in discussions with other young people.

Intervention Juli 2016 – November 2017: Training course

The nutrition-specific "Youth Nutrition Mentor" training course is a multiplier training course for people involved in open youth work. This is because social workers are important trusted and reference persons for young people and therefore ideally suited to making their institution health promoting. The training course is conducted of

following modules:

- Module 1: Special features of young people's nutrition in open youth work
- Module 2: Health promotion in open youth work
- Module 3: Practical transfer to open youth work

The development of the "Youth Nutrition Mentor" training course was based on the wishes and needs as well as the level of knowledge of the target group.

Comparison Basis

Health4youth – from the "Lehrlingsstiftung Eggenburg" was an innovative health promotion foundation for job-seeking young people in a labour market setting in 2013. H4Y_Beschreibung.pdf (fgoe.org)

Health4youth was a good practice for GAAS. Results and good practices were included in the project.

Evaluation of Outcomes

Young people with NEET status: directly 279, 4000 indirectly via the communication tools. Professional groups in psychosocial care: 55

The broad objectives of the GAAS project were as follows:

- At the end of the project, the young people with NEET status participating in the project have strengthened their health and nutritional skills and can actively shape their everyday eating habits.
- At the end of the project, a youth-specific nutrition communication product was available.
- After completing the nutrition-specific course, the participating caregivers had a greater knowledge of nutrition which supports health-promoting activities of their organizations.
- After the end of the project, the nutrition-specific course for people with basic psychosocial training was established

In addition, an evaluation workshop was held in Salzburg with young people not involved in the project to check the comprehensibility of the infographic, to assess the drink names and packaging design and to find out how the drink could be used in everyday life

Methodology used in the program for assessment

- 53 questionnaire surveys on nutritional and health status
- 10 interviews (young people and caregivers) and 2 focus groups (young people and caregivers) as well as 1 mini focus group (young people) on attitudes, perceptions, wishes and needs regarding nutrition and exercise as well as the intervention and nutrition communication product implemented in the project

- 25 BIA (bioelectrical impedance analysis) measurements (adolescents) to determine body composition carried out and evaluated.

The results of this analysis formed the basis for all further project steps. Internal and external evaluations through Master's theses.

The feedback rounds after the interventions, and also observations and interviews

The external evaluation showed that the information on healthy drinking behaviour on the beverage label is understood and correctly interpreted by young people. It also showed that young people notice and read food packaging during waiting times, e.g. for public transport. As a result, the infographic is perceived and interpreted, as well as young people's health skills are strengthened. In addition, the supervisors use the drink with the infographic as a communication tool to address the topic of health with the young people. The evaluation revealed a need for improvement, which was implemented in the further course of the project for the second label. The project team also considers the development of further information graphics with changing topics/nutritional information to be useful.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the training course, a pre-post comparison of the participants' nutritional knowledge was carried out using the General Nutrition Knowledge Questionnaire (=GNKQ) (De Souza Silveira, et al., 2015). In addition, the participants were asked about their overall assessment of the training course in a focus group after the end of the training course. The evaluation confirmed that the training course was able to significantly increase the nutritional knowledge of the graduates. The graduates are aware of new skills and can apply these in their work with young people.

Streetwork time shifts within Nordrand Mobile Jugendarbeit in St. Pölten were necessary. The implementation of two campaign days had to be postponed until December 2016 because young people can make use of the support services very flexibly and are therefore, in contrast to young people within the spacelab production school, less frequently at organization facility.

To reach a larger number of young people at facility, intervention part one (April - June 2016) was carried out at in the form of an "action weekend" instead of individual event days. The same approach was planned for intervention part two (August - October 2016). Due to the bad weather and the resulting low number of participants, the "action weekend" had to be cancelled. As an alternative, the missing two action days were carried out by in December 2016 within the organization facility in St. Pölten. As a result, support for the Facebook page "GAAS - Essen, Bewegung & Gemeinschaft", which was established for the intervention, was also extended.

Great importance was attached to participation, particularly in the planning of the intervention and the development of the nutrition communication product and the training course. It was only through the ongoing involvement of key target groups and decision-makers possible to adapt the project results to the needs of the target group. This approach led to lively participation and great motivation from the youths' and supervisors' perspective. It was confirmed several times by the frequently expressed wish for a continuation of the project by the young people. However, this level of participation required a high degree of flexibility on the part of the project team and the funding body. Identification with the project was an important success factor for the entire project.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

The participation opportunities and the self-efficacy experienced through the development of a drink, which was also produced, influenced the mental health of the target group. This group often feels unable to act and it is characterized by low self-esteem. In addition, the exchange with others and peers certainly had a health-promoting effect, too.

Nevertheless, a further project could focus even more strongly on mental health to provide targeted support in an individual or low-threshold group setting. Perhaps these topics were not asked in the analysis or were not within the focus of young people at the time of the project.

Resources required for implementation:

- Sufficient human resources
- Good networking and a multi-professional project team
- Project budget for product development

Recommendations for adaptation in other settings:

A high degree of participation, right from the start: The participating organizations (spacelab production school, Nordrand Mobile Youth Work - young people and supervisors) have been involved during the project planning and implementation of all project phases.

- The interdisciplinary composition of the project team (dietology, nutritional sciences, physiotherapy, social work).
- From the outset, designated persons for each location at the production school spacelab and Nordrand Mobile Jugendarbeit (one supervisor per location), who took on the role of contact person or person responsible for the project for the entire duration of the project. The better the person was informed about the project, the more conducive this was the achievement of the objectives.
- Interest in the project and the topics from the target group and the participating students.
- Regular meetings: These enabled a regular personal exchange within the project team, the participating students, and the project staff at the universities (University of Vienna, St. Pölten UAS).
- The good communication between the participating students and the carried out facilities and between the project staff at the universities and the locations. Support from the supervisors at the carried out facilities, especially in the intervention development, implementation phase, and in product development (e.g. preparing young people for the project, support for the students with regard to guiding the young people on action days, interest and active contribution of ideas in product development and product application).

- Confidence-building measures with the target group e.g. spending time with the target group.
- Transparency of processes within the project team.
- Flexibility within the project team and a high degree of social competence are necessary for a successful cooperation with young people.
- The topics nutrition, exercise and mental health - should be taught using practical, entertaining approaches (e.g. shopping and cooking together, nutrition games, experiments, trying out different types of sport, etc.) and with a varied program.

Additional Information and Conclusions

By focusing on the vulnerable group of young people with NEET status, the project contributes to the promotion of equal health opportunities. The implemented project measures took all relevant dimensions of health-competent open youth work, which also consciously promotes resilience (low-threshold, participation, accepting attitude, lifeworld orientation, empowerment, resource orientation, target group expertise, networking, cooperation, gender and intercultural competence, voluntariness, relationship continuity, enabling experiences of recognition and self-efficacy) into account. These were specially adapted to the target group of young people with NEET status.

The setting approach pursued in the project proved to be very effective, as the young people and the multipliers were addressed in their living environment and their specific life realities were considered. The peer-to-peer approach should be emphasized as very suitable, as the pupils used as peers were able to credibly convey a role model effect, authenticity and acceptance.

The "GAAS" project can also be rated as very successful from the perspective of the external evaluation, since all project objectives were achieved: The health literacy of the target group of young people with NEET status and the participating carers was improved. All project target groups were reached well, both the primary target group of young people with NEET status and the secondary target group of carers.

The opportunities for participation, the flexibility of the project team and the peer-to-peer approach were perceived as particularly valuable and positive by all project participants and were one of the most important success factors of the project.

- GAAS | Fonds Gesundes Österreich (fgoe.org)
- https://fgoe.org/sites/fgoe.org/files/project-attachments/171205_Endbericht%20GAAS_FG%C3%96_FINAL.pdf

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs

☒ Personal education, knowledge

☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)

☒ Stress management and regeneration

☒ Exercise/physical activity

☒ Nutritional behavior

☒ Addictive behavior

☐ Other

Social & community networks

☒ Social support structures / services

☒ Personal social networks

☒ Empowerment/participation

☒ Networking of professional actors

☐ Other

- [https://fgoe.org/sites/fgoe.org/files/project-attachments/Poster%20GAAS_%C3%96PGK \(3\) Facebook%20Konferenz%202017.pdf](https://fgoe.org/sites/fgoe.org/files/project-attachments/Poster%20GAAS_%C3%96PGK%20(3)%20Facebook%20Konferenz%202017.pdf)
- Projekt zur Förderung der Gesundheitskompetenzen von Jugendlichen, die sich nicht in Ausbildung, Arbeit oder Schulung befinden (fhstp.ac.at)
- GAAS (univie.ac.at)
- GAAS - Projekt zur Förderung der Gesundheitskompetenzen von Jugendlichen im NEET- Status | gesunde-jugendarbeit.at
- GAAS – Projekt zur Förderung der Gesundheitskompetenzen von Jugendlichen, die sich nicht in Ausbildung, Arbeit oder Schulung befinden - ÖPGK (oepgk.at)
- Elisabeth.hoeld@fhstp.ac.at
- Garbriele.karner@fhstp.ac.at

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Youth as Social Changemakers

Association Amica Educa

Tuzla Canton

Main goals

Longterm goal: Young people of Tuzla City contribute to social changes focusing on youth mental health, gender equality and peace building.

Project goal 1: Through improving their mental health, communication skills and awareness on gender equality, young people are able to claim their rights in private and social life.

Project goal 2: The importance of youth mental health and gender equality is addressed in public by young people.

Project goal 3: Together with public authorities, relevant institutions and NGOs, young people actively participate in initiating changes and decisions concerning their needs and rights in mental health and gender equality.

Target groups

40 young people between 16 and 30 years old, from area of Tuzla City and Tuzla Canton.

The criteria according to which the selection of young people who will be involved in the project is made were:

- High school and university students or unemployed
- Young people at risk of mental health problems, who lack self-confidence and self-esteem, who lack skills to realize their intellectual and emotional potentials, to set and achieve goals, to make changes in their environment and to contribute to society.
- Young people who do not have knowledge on the principles of gender equality and nonviolent communication and therefore cannot take actions for improvement of their position in their private surrounding and social environment.
- Young people lacking knowledge and skills that enable them active participation in society or implementation of actions that contribute to social change.
- Young people with experience in activism but with a lack of knowledge and skills for time management, anti-stress and burnout prevention.
- Young people who are willing to promote the values of democracy, secularism, anti-fascism, nonviolence, volunteerism and activism in the community and society.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☐ national
- ☐ regional
- ☒ county-level
- ☒ municipal

Description of Intervention

The project began with the preparation of the Analysis on Youth Mental Health and Gender Equality, which contains information on the current legal framework, policies and institutional mechanisms in the Federation of BiH and Tuzla Canton (with a focus on the city of Tuzla) in connection with the improvement of youth mental health and gender equality; Information about programs and services provided by institutions and organizations and their actual impact on meeting the needs of young girls and boys (especially when their needs are different); Conclusions on shortcomings, difficulties and problems and recommendations for overcoming the shortcomings, difficulties and problems of competent authorities and non-governmental organizations for the application of mechanisms for improving the mental health of young people and gender equality. In addition to the desk examination, an interview with a total of 16 representatives of relevant institutions and organizations was carried out as part of the analysis and an instrument for measuring the project effects. At the same time, a questionnaire was created for monitoring the impact of the project, i.e. measuring the initial and final state, focusing on changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour related to mental health, gender equality and activism of young people - project participants.

Activities with young people in the first year of the project were aimed at conducting psycho-educational workshops where young people had the opportunity to strengthen themselves on a personal level, improve their mental and social health and at the same time educate themselves in the areas of Youth mental health, Gender equality and Nonviolent Communication (according to Marshall Rosenberg). Each topic of the workshop lasted a total of 9 days, which were distributed in blocks / modules of 2 or 3 days. For young people who were facing mental health issues, individual and group psychotherapy support was offered for a duration of 3 months. After completing the psycho-education, the young people, now as project volunteers, started a campaign on social networks (Instagram and Facebook) in which they created posts for the purpose of educating other young people about the importance of improving mental health and with the aim of destigmatizing mental health in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the first year, the project included a total of 40 young people.

In the second project year, 53 young people were offered a set of 3 trainings through which they increased their knowledge and skills in the field of activism and advocacy: Advocacy and use of Nonviolent Communication, Implementation of Street and Online campaigns, Performances and cooperation with the media. Each training lasted 9 days. At the same time, young people had the opportunity to participate in psychoeducational workshops within the organization's regular program (eg Family Dynamics, Empathy, Art Therapy, etc.) and individual psychotherapy sessions. Through these activities, young people continuously worked on improving their mental health, increasing social skills, resilience, etc.

In addition to education and work on themselves, young people, as volunteers of the project, in this project year showed initiative and readiness, designed, prepared and implemented several activities:

- 9 psycho-educative workshops on mental and social health, which included 170 peers from different communities in Tuzla Canton
- a street campaign on youth mental health, with 8 different activities, which included over

1.000, mostly young people from Tuzla city with an intensive campaign on social networks and over 110 published posts about the mental health of young people, about 1,500,000 people were reached across Bosnia and Herzegovina.

- through media appearances (radio, TV, internet portals), over 250,000 people in BiH were informed about the importance of promoting the mental health of young people.

In the third year of the project, young people were offered training through which they had the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills in the areas of *Preparation and implementation of workshops, Preparation and implementation of a round table, Public and media appearances; Business communication and negotiation; and Political literacy and involvement in decision making bodies.*

The trainings lasted from 3 to 6 days.

In addition to acquiring knowledge, the trainings were also used to define the activities that the young people prepared and implemented in the next phase of the project:

- Round table: *Do you hear us?!* on youth mental health gathering and informing over 60 people from Tuzla Canton (youth and representatives of relevant institutions and organizations);
- Workshops, group sessions and presentations on youth mental health, gender equality and peace building, informing and educating over 200 young people / peers in Tuzla Canton.
- Campaign on social networks on youth mental health, which reached over 600,000 people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Providing support in the implementation of campaigns, marches or various initiatives (organized by other non-formal groups or organisations) that contribute to the destigmatization and improvement of mental health, gender equality and peace building among the citizens of BiH.
- In addition to this, in this project year also had the opportunity to participate in individual psychotherapy sessions and psychoeducational workshops through which they empowered themselves and improved their mental and social health.

A total of 68 young people were involved in the project through participation in one or more activities since the beginning of its implementation.

The methodology at psychoeducational workshops is a combination of short theoretical lectures / presentations with a much greater focus on experiential individual or group exercises, open discussions on specific topics or personal experiences of the participants. Psychological support and counseling are inseparable parts of every workshop. Special emphasis is placed on establishing trust in the group. The workshops are above all a safe space for open conversation and an opportunity for young people to be heard and supported in the difficulties they face (on an emotional, cognitive and behavioural level). At the same time, using relaxation techniques, breathing exercises, guided meditation, somatic exercises, etc., young people get the opportunity to release and prevent stress and burnout.

During the entire project, there were synergies and various forms of cooperation with relevant institutions and organizations (such as Cantonal Ministry of Youth, Center for Mental Health, Tuzla University, various secondary schools, etc.) and were mainly reflected in:

- Support in the distribution of project information in order to achieve greater visibility and disseminate the results of the project;

- Joint appearance towards the public and the media;
- Cooperation in organizing and implementing a street campaign and round table
- Exchange of available information related to services, activities and project for young people (relevant to the mental health and gender equality)
- At the end of the project, the young people filled out final evaluation questionnaires to measure the effect of the project, and the results are briefly described in the chapter Evaluation of Outcomes.

The project was implemented in period January 01, 2021 – December 31, 2023.

With the addition of certain elements and activities, the project will continue to be implemented in 2024 and 2025.

Resources utilised (financial, human, material):

The annual budget of the project was about 50,000 euros (for 3 years in total about 150,000 euros) Within the project, the following personnel were engaged (in different percentages): Director of Association, Accountant, Project coordinator and Project Assistant who largely took over the development and realization of workshops and other project activities, Project Administrator as well as occasionally hired external staff - consultants (mainly for conducting specific training topics, creating the document Analysis of the needs of young people related to mental health and gender equality, conducting project impact measurement, etc.)

In addition to overhead costs, parts of salaries or fees for engagements of project staff, other costs were related to the implementation of workshops (material, refreshment), implementation of specific project activities, fees for project volunteers, etc.

Comparison Basis

Similar initiatives at the local or regional level in Bosnia and Herzegovina are mostly related to projects that have a component of youth mental health, but in such a way that the transfer of basic knowledge to young people is carried out within short-term workshops or presentations. Young people who participate in such workshops get new information and partially increase their knowledge.

Such project lacks somewhat longer and deeper work with young people, as well as the element of experiential learning and psychological support, which is why the acquired knowledge is not usable on a personal level. Young people have no real opportunity to work on themselves, personal empowerment, improvement of mental health, reduction of symptoms of mental distress, etc. Also, such projects do not have a strong enough or no component of mental health promotion in society.

Evaluation of Outcomes

Measuring the effect and success of the project is based on the following criteria:

- Improving the mental health of young people, increasing resilience, improving emotional literacy, reducing stress and burnout, reducing mental health issues, positive changes on a cognitive, emotional and behavioural level, increasing self-confidence and self-esteem, etc.

- Improving the quality of life of young people, increasing the impression of control over life, increasing self-initiative and motivation for change, the ability to influence changes in the private environment and society.
- Increasing understanding of concepts and knowledge in the field of youth mental health, gender equality and peace building. The methodology used for measuring the effect and success of the project is as follows:
- Evaluation questionnaires filled in by project participants after each workshop
- Initial and final evaluation questionnaires filled in by the participants, at the beginning and at the end of the project
- Monitoring and observation of participants (their development and progress) by the project staff during workshops, psychotherapy sessions, group meetings, individual meetings and conversations, etc.

Evaluation summaries - measuring the effect and success of the project:

- With certain variables related to different thematic units (workshops), a significant positive effect was achieved in the knowledge, skills and attitudes of project participants, ranging from 35% to 70% of participants who made progress.
- Significant positive results were achieved in educating participants about various mental health
- issues among young people, as well as about the needs of mental health care. These results indicate that the project successfully educated young people about mental health, increased awareness of the importance of mental health care, and encouraged a greater willingness to seek professional support.
- The results of the analysis clearly show the positive impact of the project participants, with an increase in their awareness, understanding and knowledge about gender equality, institutional mechanisms, the legal framework and support in cases of gender-based discrimination and violence.
- The project achieved its goals in educating and raising awareness among young people about the importance of peace building, use of Nonviolent communication and emotional literacy. Changes in attitudes and perceptions indicate the positive impact of the project on the participants.

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and re-generation
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behavior
- ☒ Addictive behavior
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☐ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☐ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

By monitoring the changes and progress of the participants by the project staff (psychologists and psychotherapists) and through interviews with the participants, 51 (out of 68) young people report the following changes in their mental and social health:

- Reduction or complete withdrawal of symptoms of various mental health issues (mainly related to anxiety, panic attacks and depression)
- Improvement in the adoption of healthy lifestyle habits: healthy eating, regular sleep,

- exercise,
- Better stress and anger management
- Better management of emotions and needs
- Increase of self-esteem and self-confidence
- Improvement in setting boundaries in interpersonal relationships (to say NO)
- Increase of impression of control over own life
- Improvement of interpersonal relationships, especially relationships within the family as well as with peers
- Increase in the ability to think critically and to express opinions
- Better self-presentation in different contexts (at school, university, at job interviews, at public performances, etc.)

(Up)Scalability and allocation

Without special challenges and difficulties, the project could be implemented at the level of schools, universities and even at the regional or national level.

The most important resource is well-trained activity leaders: people with knowledge and skills in the field of psychology and non-formal education, people with experience in working with young people, people with excellent communication skills, developed empathy, adaptable and open to innovation brought by young people.

In order to achieve better visibility and greater influence in society, it is desirable to have good networking and cooperation with relevant institutions, organizations and media.

Additional Information and Conclusions

The assessment of the contribution of the initiative / project to resilience development is described in the chapter Evaluation of Out- comes / Key findings and impacts on target group(s). However, the best indicator that the young people who participated in the project accepted the project well, managed to develop their resilience, improved their mental and social health, etc., is shown by the fact that the vast majority of young people advocated for the continuation of the project and the inclusion of an element of individual peer counselling. In this regard, their statements can be summarized in: *"Now that I have felt the benefits of working on myself, when I have managed to become a person who copes with life's challenges more easily, a person who knows how to manage myself better and who lives a happier and more fulfilling life, I also want to become a person who can help other young people in my society."*

- [Baseline Analysis on Gender Equality and Mental Health of Young People in Tuzla Canton](#)
- [Report on the conducted measurement of the effect of the pro-ject "Youth as Social Changemakers" and the needs of youth in Tuzla City and Tuzla Canton](#)
- [Promotional video: Street campaing on Youth mental health](#) and [Training on conducting campaing on social networks](#)
- [Instagram page of the project – social network campaign on Youth Mental Health\)](#)

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Young Man Initiative YMI

PRONI Centre for Youth Development

Brcko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Main goals

The main goal of the project is to promote healthy lifestyles and reduce interpersonal violence among young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina by challenging gender stereotypes. The project focuses on the education of young high school students and is at the same time dedicated to creating a healthier, safer and non-violent community. By promoting healthy lifestyles and resilience through education, volunteer engagement and cooperation, the project aims to bring about positive and lasting changes in the lives of individuals and the well-being of entire communities.

Target groups

Main target group were young people, primarily students of one technical secondary school (aged 14-19, male and female) and young people from community.

Description of Intervention

The presented project is part of regional project (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Kosovo) implemented in two phases, for purposes of this Catalogue we present the second phase of the project Young Men Initiative implemented in town Brcko, Brcko District, by PRONI, partner on the regional project. The first phase was realized in duration of three years, followed with second phase in period of 2021-2023. It is important to emphasize that this project was realized in different towns in B&H, implemented by different organizations. Implementing organizations have organized joint actions and meetings of young people through the project implementation time.

Activities for this project were implemented in two settings, within schools and in the community. We need to emphasize that the project is equally open and inclusive for young men and women in the community.

Activities of the project;

- Establishing cooperation with one secondary technical school and acquiring approval from Department of Education to implement project in school. PRONI is youth organization that is recognized as quality partner in the community, this enabled them to be well received by schools as well as educational authority and receive approval to conduct activities in the school.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☐ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☒ municipal

- In order to follow achieved results, base line testing of knowledge, skills and attitudes of 110 students (male and female). The tests were created to be in accordance to the used methodology.
- After completion of the workshops, at the end of the project, retest was done with the same group of students. Results show significant improvement in measured items.
- Realization of educative workshops with 6 groups/school classes, each group attended 8-10 work-shops. This has demanded a significant cooperation and coordination with school staff and project staff, as well as students.
- For workshops a methodology was used: Program Y – Innovative approaches in prevention of gender-based violence and promotion of healthy lifestyles of young boys and girls. Program Y is an evidence-based educational curriculum, specifically created for youth work, that contributes to the development of functional knowledge, attitudes and psychosocial skills of young people, which are important predispositions for their healthy and safer growing up. Based on modern pedagogical methods of work, which include collaborative and participatory learning, Program Y prepares young people to recognize and understand risks, to think critically about the consequences and it prepares them to make decisions that are in the best interest of their psychological and physical health and the health of their peers. The methodology contains 4 thematic areas: Identity development, Violence is out, Sexual and reproductive health, Parenting, Be the change you search for!. The program helps students develop own identity, emotional intelligence, interpersonal communication skills, negotiation skills, life skills with emphasis on critical thinking, decision making and problem solving, skills for crisis resolving, pro-social and social competences, adopt attitudes and values gender equality, healthy lifestyles related to substance abuse and sexual health, attitude of tolerance towards other people, self-confidence, peer pressure resilience and empathy.
- Further, the project had a goal of connecting and integrating young people with different ethnicity, gender, social background and status, living area (rural and urban), etc. This was achieved by organizing Youth Clubs. Youth Clubs enabled regular meetings of young people and safe space for learning, sharing and discussing ideas. This resulted with young people making initiatives and act as change agents in their communities. Youth Clubs were open for all youth from community. Even after completion of the project, Youth Clubs continue to be space for young people to share, connect, acquire skills and knowledge to engage in issues that matter to them and plan initiatives in the community.
- Within Youth Clubs, young people have nurtured community engagement and created and implemented 15 campaigns (live and online) on different topics in the field of mental health, gender and violence prevention. Here, young people showed community engagement, sense of agency and willingness to contribute to changes in areas they find important in their community and for young people in the community. Through these campaigns they had opportunity to use and further integrate knowledge and skills developed through workshops or Club meetings, they also learned to rely on peer support. This also included cooperation, exchange and joint activities with Youth Clubs from other towns and countries, strengthening network of young people and their engagement in public.
- Young people were also included in strategic meetings and planning with project partners and donors, allowing them to foster sense of control and agency, but also directly impact the policies and prospects of young people in the community.

Added value of the project;

- Within cooperation with school and discussing needs for mental health of students, need for psychologist employed in school was defined. This was followed with joint advocacy activities of PRONI, school and young people towards government of Brcko District. 2 more schools joined the initiative and result was that psychologist office/counseling room was equipped in 2 secondary schools in Brcko and psychologist was engaged in both schools (part time) for approximately one school year. The advocacy continues after the completion of the project and it is expected that the government will find long-term solutions so that psychological support to students in secondary schools will be available continually within the schooling system.
- Additionally, by initiative of one secondary school that was not initially in the project, 7 pilot work- shops from the Program were implemented with two groups of students, including total of 30 participants.
- The whole project gained significant media promotion, focusing on promoting the need for mental health support for young people in secondary schools and community.

Sustainability;

- Young people have continued to meet within the Youth Club, supported by PRONI staff members. Even though the project is officially closed, the Youth Club concept showed sustainability as young people continue to meet, make initiatives and organize campaigns.
- One group of young people that has developed experience and skills within project activities, can be further educated and engaged as a resource for peer educators.
- PRONI is in search for funding for continuance and further development of this project and initiatives developed through it.

The project phase presented in this document lasted three years, period 2021-2023.

Resources utilised (financial, human, material):

- The project was realized with very limited financial resources. The budget for 3 years was approximately 12 500 Euro.
- Human resources utilized were a coordinator who, in addition to coordination and administration activities, led workshops and meetings with youth. External associates were engaged per need, some of them on volunteer basis. Significant resource were young people, the beneficiaries of the project, who as volunteers contributed to many project activities and initiatives.
- Workshop methodology is owned by CARE International and provided for this project.

Comparison Basis

Different initiatives are available in the youthwork community in general. The initiative we present is proven effective because of its methodology which can be used in formal school system, allowing to reach young people who are usually not active in nonformal education and community, while at the same time connecting youth from community through Youth Clubs. The methodology covers developmentally important topics for youth. As previously mentioned, similar projects were implemented regionally and in different Bosnia and Herzegovina towns.

We excluded other initiatives because the initiative in Brcko had significant added value; impact on

pro- motion of youth mental health that resulted involving government of Brcko District and schools in joint actions to address the youth mental health problems and act in terms of prevention and intervention. This project had advocacy that contributed to significant and potentially sustainable changes in systemic approach to mental health of young people and this added value was what made this project stand out.

Evaluation of Outcomes

Criteria for success was based on measured effects on the level of: knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviours of young people participating the projects. Topics in which changes were measured were: gender attitudes, violence prevention, sexual and reproductive health, prevention of alcohol, drug abuse and sexual violence, combined with personal skills such as communication and social skill, self-aware- ness and self-confidence, etc. Program was assessed by base line – end line research conducted with 108 (F 24, M 84) students of the school where workshops were realized.

This testing was very important segment of the project where the comparison of knowledge, skills and attitudes of students, project participants was made, measuring the success of the activities.

Key impact on target group, derived from base line and end line research analysis on target group:

- Participants reported the most significant or positive changes experienced at the personal and social skills levels. They claimed to have gained self-respect and felt greater self-esteem as a direct result of the project activities. They have learned how to express their views more freely and openly as well as how to embrace diversity. They developed greater resilience to peer pressure and improved their communication skills. They claim their critical thinking is more developed and they learned how to deal with their own emotions.
- Program had a positive impact on changing attitudes towards violence and decreasing violent behaviour towards peers, particularly with regards to physical violence. The program also had a positive effect on reducing negative attitudes towards gender-based violence and strengthening positive behaviours in relationships.
- The majority of participants reported an increase in knowledge about sexual and reproductive health, contraceptives, sexually transmitted infections, etc.
- Participants reported a positive impact of the program on prevention of alcohol, drug and other psychoactive substance use: contributed to a more responsible attitude and behavior of young people towards the use of psychoactive substances, encouraged building personal resilience to harmful influences and emotional awareness to understand why people engage in substance use. The pro- gram offered youth with addiction tendencies resources to seek help.
- The positive impact on changing attitudes towards sexual harassment has been observed. Program participants are more informed about types of sexual violence and have demonstrated efforts to prevent some forms of sexual harassment in school. With continued efforts and attention to education on these topics, there is hope for further progress in reducing sexual violence and promoting a culture of respect and safety.

Additional results:

- equipped 2 offices in 2 schools for psychological counselling
- lobbying activities for financing employment of psychologist in secondary schools in Brčko

resulted with government promises for financing the employment in the future and engagement of schools in addressing this issue

- public promotion of importance of youth mental health
- effect of different youth campaigns on the community in general.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

This project concept and used methodology can be adapted and scaled on different levels and settings.

Methodology Program Y is available for use with consent of the owner CARE International. Contact for the methodology: jcrown-over@carenw.org, spetkovic@carenw.org

This methodology Program Y, youth clubs and overall project form in general can be adopted and used in different settings, contexts.

Peer leaders can be educated to use the methodology.

Additionally, new methodology Program Y PLUS is also developed, with focus group of marginalized people.

Additional Information and Conclusions

The project addresses main relevant topics and related challenges, that young people face in daily life. With recorded results of conducted workshop sets, affecting their personal knowledge, skills and attitudes, additional resource for resilience is Youth Club as safe space for sharing, support and creating ideas for community and activism. Networking with young people from different communities also opens endless possibilities and creates a support network. All mentioned significantly contributes to resilience of young people in Brčko, giving them resources to create changes in their life and in their community, but also to resist challenges they face daily.

In long-term, the initiative for availability of psychologist within school system will significantly provide needed support system for young people, their mental health and resilience.

www.proni.ba <https://youngmeninitiative.net/en/>
<https://care-balkan.org/> <https://www.facebook.com/BMKBD>

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health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and regeneration
- ☒ Exercise/physical activity
- ☒ Nutritional behaviour
- ☒ Addictive behaviour
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☒ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☒ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

Training program Life Skills and Employability Skills

Association Amica Educa

Tuzla Canton, Tuzla

Main goals

Goal of the training program is to support vulnerable young people in developing necessary life skills and personal resources that support their mental health and resilience in everyday life, as well as developing their employability skills helping them to own sense of clear future orientation and make action towards socio-economic independence and stability.

Target groups

51 Disadvantaged, socio-economically excluded young people (aged 15 to 35), divided in 4 groups, each including approximately 12-13 participants.

Program targeted young people coming from alternative care institutions (without parental care, from foster families, families at risk of breakdown), underprivileged youth with multiple social needs (youth with low income or with seasonal jobs, youth exploited by employers with no realistic opportunities to improve economic status on their own, with poor family/social networks, NEET group of young people) from Tuzla Canton, especially young women (at least 40%) that are under-represented in the population of working young people. Other vulnerable/ disadvantaged young people from local community with characteristics similar to those targeted were also included.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☒ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☐ national
- ☐ regional
- ☒ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Description of the training program

The training program of young underprivileged people for better socio-economic integration with holistic and individualized approach has been implemented as follows:

Preparative activities included training of trainers for the methodology, meetings with institutions and organizations working with target group, promotion of the program and inviting targeted youth for participation.

The project staff formed a homogeneous group of targeted young people, in accordance to the age and background in order to ensure adequate group dynamics and learning environment. Young people were introduced to program activities, goals and skills they will acquire once they complete training.

Case management procedure was completed with each participant in individual sessions and included following documents: Application Form, Needs Assessment, Individual Development Plan, Pre-test.

Individual Development Plan (IDP) is the starting point for work with young people. It is created in cooperation with young persons, reflecting their specific needs, based on a holistic approach that defines needed psycho-social support, in addition to professional qualifications and actions. This way participants can reflect their own inclinations, abilities, strengths and desires and reduce fear of pursuing their goals. Furthermore, the aim of this activity is to establish trusting partnership with a young person and guide her to define short-term and long-term goals and steps for achievement, which is continuously reviewed throughout the project. Throughout the training, the young person is motivated and supported in following the set goals and defined steps.

The training methodology used is the "Next Economy" developed by Aflatoun International (<https://www.aflatoun.org>), a Dutch non-governmental organization that provides education in social and financial skills to children and young people around the world. This methodology is specifically designed to enable young people to develop their talents, build their self-confidence and improve professional and personal skills they need for a successful employment and career. Capacity building for this project required training of the trainers. In our case, Amica Educa team member is educated as a Master trainer for trainers, while other 3 team members are educated to use the methodology as youth trainers. The training methodology had 3 parts: Life skills Curriculum, Employability Curriculum and Coaching Curriculum. Content is adjusted to the age group of participants, with interactive and experiential teaching methods, related to real-life situations.

The Life Skills Curriculum helps in determining the interests and inner motivation of the trainees. It focuses on their personal development and recognition of the value of their own actions, abilities and responsibilities. It gives participants the opportunity to not only better understand themselves, but also each other. It gives structure to their hopes, dreams, fears and goals. Covering topics such as self-awareness and self-presentation, setting personal aims, communication skills and conflict resolution, gender rights and problem-solving skills, along with financial literacy and employment fundamentals, participants are provided with a diverse, hands-on experience. This process helps participants to gain self-confidence, as well as the awareness that their personal skills can be further developed, useful and can contribute to the improvement of their life quality as well as future economic activities. Through participation in this life skills curriculum, some students even discover a passion for something or realize that their current interests could lead to a career, further education opportunity or business idea. Through presented topics and experiential, individualized approach, curriculum provides support to personal development, mental health of young people and builds resilience.

Employability skills curriculum provides basic training in job search and workplace skills, helps young people to understand their rights, identify own strengths and suitable work opportunities using effective communication and good time management. Participants acquire the skills, knowledge and confidence necessary to look for good opportunities for a job that matches their

personal goals and interests, that adequately represents them and enables them to become successful employees, colleagues or managers.

The Employability Curriculum follows a similar route as the Basic Life Skills Curriculum, which means that from the very beginning it encourages participants to learn about their own skills, strengths, weaknesses, personal interests, and deepen self-confidence in their own abilities and awareness of employment opportunities and their goals. The program is then individualized and participants are directed to research job opportunities, improve their resumes and motivation letters, and practice interview performance. Young people also learn about what is and what is not fair employment in terms of the rules and requirements of the workplace and knowledge of employee rights. The combination of knowledge that the workshop provides about skills in the workplace and practical activities of writing resumes and interview exercises is necessary to prepare the participants who, after completing this program, go into the real world of work. Purpose of the program is to inspire youth, contribute to the local economy and increase financial sustainability. In the long term, upon completion of this program, all participants use the learned techniques for setting goals, critical thinking, problem solving, and internal motivation and responsible decision-making in their daily lives and activities. Additionally, empowering a new generation of workers also means improving communities and society, since it implies a greater degree of inclusion and diversity.

Connection to business sector and employers is included in the methodology. Due to labour law in Bosnia and Herzegovina, job shadowing tailored to the interests of each young person was not possible. Group visits to employers were organized instead.

Individual and/or group coaching sessions are included in the training. They are based on Coaching Curriculum (part of the methodology). Coaching is interconnected to the curriculum's topics and aim to support participants in more individualized manner for further integration of skills and knowledge.

Evaluation of outcomes is part of the methodology and is conducted via pretest and post-test comparison, and program evaluation forms completed by participants at the end of the program.

Furthermore, a six-month follow-up evaluation was conducted with all participants (in person or by telephone); for employed young people and those who are still looking for work. Even during the first six months of employment this way of support: monitoring, revision of achieved goals set in IRP, followed by counseling for improvement in their current situation was beneficial.

Psychotherapeutic group support was also included in the program (it is not part of the methodology) for participants who wanted to use this type of support. Considering background of vulnerable young people and diverse, often traumatic experiences they have psychotherapeutic support, in addition to training on personal skills, was necessary for supporting mental health and resilience of this target group. All included young people report on significant changes in their day to day functioning, overall wellbeing increased as well as improved positive self-image and connectedness to their personal resources.

Supervision for professionals working with underprivileged youth aimed to support professionals involved in the program, to improve their practice in working with the target group and to strengthen their personal and professional competencies.

The training program was implemented in period June 2020 – June 2022 Resources utilised (financial, human, material) included following:

- 4 team members were certified as trainers for this methodology out of which 2 were actively involved in implementing the program (coordinating, case study documentation, training, coaching, etc.)
- Certified psychotherapist experienced in working with young people
- Materials needed: standard training materials, workbooks for participants (included in the methodology) and work materials for the participants.
- Financial resources needed for: coordination and trainers fee, refreshment for participants, premises for therapy and group work/training and training materials, laptop (for young people to use for research and CV preparation), travel costs for participants (when needed), etc.

Comparison Basis

Young people who participate in such workshops do get new information and partially increase their knowledge, but lack of holistic and individualized approach supports achievement of only short-term results.

Other initiatives do not offer holistic and individualized approach that steadily supports young person in development of skills, knowledge and attitudes that leads to long-term and sustainable changes in their lives. This methodology offers all above mentioned and that is reason we chose to implement this program and not others.

Evaluation of Outcomes

Criteria for success were variations in the attitude, knowledge and skills of participants, related to personal life skills (self-confidence, positive attitude and self-motivation, communication and problem solving, interpersonal skills, financial literacy) and employability skills (employment planning, transferable employment skills, knowledge on rights and responsibilities of employees and employers, knowledge and skills to overcome work and personal challenges), before and after the training program.

Overall satisfaction of participants with the program was also a criteria.

Additional criteria were recorded positive changes young people made in their life related to their everyday functioning, education, socio-economic position, employment status and active job search, etc.

Assessment was conducted with mixed methods:

The pre and post survey conducted with participants, allowed to estimate variations in the knowledge, attitude and behaviour of young people as a result of attending the program. This survey consisted of two parts, each of them refers to one of the two modules. To estimate those variations, with pre-survey the basic knowledge, attitude and behaviour of the participants were measured before starting the program. Once the program is over, the survey was repeated with the same participants and comparison had given quantitative and qualitative representation of achieved

results.

Other case management documents were used to make qualitative assessment:

- program evaluation form completed at the end of both modules,
- verbal evaluations and feedback of participants,
- individual development plan achievements,
- coaching sessions and individual counseling reports, which also included professional assessment of each young person completed by the trainers and project staff.

Evaluation summaries - measuring the effect and success of the program:

- With certain variables related to different thematic units and Curriculums, a significant positive effect was achieved in the knowledge, skills and attitudes of project participants, ranging from 50% to 70% of participants who made progress.
- The results analysis clearly show the positive impact of the project participants, with an increase in their awareness, understanding and attitudes related to self-awareness, self-confidence and self- motivation, positive attitude and communication skills.
- The results show that most of the participants report on improved social relationships and personal boundaries. They became more future and goal oriented, taking more responsibility for their life.
- The program has resulted with strong social connection and networks among young people, they continue to stay connected and support each other after completion of the program. Positive results were achieved in employability Skills Training, indicate that the program successfully improved knowledge, skills and attitudes of young people related to employability skills, self-presentation and interview skills, time management and future planning, employee rights, problem solving, ect.
- The program educated young people about mental health, in- creased awareness of the importance of mental health care, and encouraged a greater willingness to seek professional support.
- The results show increased awareness and positive attitudes related to education, lifelong learning and nonformal education for personal and professional growth, resulting with significant percentage of young people continuing further education, taking courses and workshops related to their interests.

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and re-generation
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behaviour
- ☐ Addictive behaviour
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☒ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☒ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

Working with this target group of young people was challenging in terms of their lack of commitment, focus, and respecting boundaries, especially at the beginning of the project. The approach of the project team had to be adjusted and flexible for each young person involved. This approach we found effective as we have managed to keep every young person in the project and actively involved, but it was time consuming which was not planned initially.

Due to labour law restrictions, planned individual job shadowing for training participants was not possible to organize. We addressed this issue in a way that we organized group visits to different businesses and employers.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

This program and its methodology were implemented within regional project coordinated by SOS Children's Villages National Associations in 5 countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, North Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo), each including 3-4 municipalities and implementing partners. The focus group and overall aim was the same, but the context and national regulations were different for each country and some adjustments at the national level had to be made. Nevertheless, the methodology has proven effective and, in each country, outcomes were achieved as planned. This shows that this curriculum is applicable in variety of contexts. In our estimation, this program can be used also in formal school setting, as the curriculum holds all necessary elements for integration in school system.

Resources needed:

- Approval of Aflatoun International, Holland for use of the Next Economy methodology
- Trained trainers for use of the methodology, previously experienced in working with underprivileged youth
- Training materials and premises for the training
- Therapist for therapeutical support for young people (optional)

Financial resources are mainly related to: trainers fee, training materials and premises, refreshment for participants, travel costs for participants (optional) etc.

Additional Information and Conclusions

The term 'improved socio-economic integration' from position of one person affected by it, is large and life changing. This is what we perceive with young persons involved in the training program, development of skills, attitudes and knowledge who replicate on all life aspects not only the employment level are life changing in many ways for young people.

After completing the program, young people show sense of control and agency, motivation for change and involvement, they are taking responsibility for their life, engage in supportive relationships and peer supporting, they show future orientation and optimism, use stress management skills. All mentioned contributes to resilience and overall wellbeing of young people.

<https://aflatoun.org/>

<https://amicaeduca.ba/en/yeep-youth-empowerment-enabling-prospects/>

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Bulgaria

Tell me (Разкажи ми)

co-funded by Unicef.org

Bulgaria

Main goals

"Tell Me" is a digital platform for psychosocial support, positioned on the Bulgarian market in 2021. The founders of the platform are united around the clear vision that with the help of technology they can improve people's mental health by facilitating access to resources and making professional counselling more accessible and convenient so that everyone gets the support they need.

When the platform was created the founding team knew that to make their vision a reality they needed to take a different approach – one where they deliver personalized care to users with just a few clicks at a time and place that is convenient for them. They create a web platform and mobile applications that provide a secure sharing environment and connect users with appropriate professionals to support them, following a holistic approach in the overall recovery process.

Target groups

Companies and their employees, Teenagers (via Unicef Bulgaria), psychosocial services for young people between the ages of 14 and 24.

Description of Intervention

The organization "Tell me" (Разкажи ми) developed professional psychological materials aiming at first at companies and their employees, for support, career guidance, burnout, work related stress etc. In 2022 Unicef Bulgaria partnered with them and created professional materials for young children age 14 – 24, creating safe place (virtual room) with free access to materials related to: Depression, Addiction, Eating disorder, Toxic relationships, Child psychology, Self-care, Work, Stress, Insomnia, Burnout, Loneliness, Relationships, Emotional Intelligence, Motivation, Personal development and Anxiety. The initiative can be reached both via laptop/computer and smart phones running on Android or IOs. Currently materials are available in Bulgarian, English and Romanian languages. There are also video lessons, while most of the materials are as separate text files. There are also self-tests for determining psychological status and in some cases, recommendation for personal meeting with psychologist. All materials are available for children and their parents, as well as for teachers if they are interested.

It is not known how many of UNICEF staff was involved. "Tell me" have a team of about 15 professional psychologist. There is no data how many people were involved in the development of the application for Android and IOs.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☒ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Web based platform and application for mobile phones running on Android and ios.

Comparison Basis

In difference with the other practice "Project L.I.K.E." this practise has reached a very big number of people and has the potential to be used nationally. UNICEF is well known and trusted in Bulgaria and they regularly work with a great number of schools, so their application can be really adopted widely.

Evaluation of outcomes

239874 people were reached while the mobile applications were downloaded 7394 times. There are no detailed data for 2023 yet.

The initiative provides for self-assessment, self-learning, self-education. Further on if needed a meeting with professional psychologist is provided as option. There are no public data on assessment due to confidentiality of data. Safe room and safe space for young people and their parents exclude sharing of any data and usage of the platform.

See above – no publicly disposed data is available. However, a study by UNICEF from 2023 shows that 11.2% (73 808) young people age 10 – 19 have some form of psychological problems, 46% of all young people have experienced emotional or psycho- logical abuse, and every second young person reports negative feelings such as loneliness, insecurity, irritability, and anxiety (2020).

(Up)Scalability and allocation

The practice can be adapted and scaled up by focusing on accessibility, collaboration, and community engagement. Here are steps that can be undertaken:

- Multilingual Expansion: Increase language offerings based on regional needs to reach a broader demographic.
- Accessibility Features: Incorporate features like screen readers and text-to-speech to aid users with disabilities.
- Broaden Topics: Update and expand topics to include issues like cyberbullying, social media impact, and pandemic-related stress.
- Use AI tools to offer personalized advice and content based on user behaviour and preferences
- Partner with schools and universities to integrate the platform into mental health programs.
- Engage with government bodies and non-profits for funding and to reach underserved communities.
- Use social media to raise awareness about the website and app, targeting specific vulnerable groups.
- Track engagement and resource effectiveness to inform ongoing improvements Resources needed: PC or Laptop, Mobile smartphone.

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and re-generation
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behaviour
- ☒ Addictive behaviour
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☒ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☐ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

Additional Information and Conclusions

<https://razkazhimi.online/>

Mobile app at Google Play and App Store (IOs):

App Store:

<https://apps.apple.com/bg/app/%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%B6%D0%B8-%D0%BC%D0%B8/id1602769357>

Google Play: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.georgipavlov.razkazhimimobile>

Available languages: Bulgarian, English and Romanian

Well@School project

Medical University of Plovdiv

Plovdiv, Bulgaria, Turku-Finland, Novo mesto –Slovenia, West Attika, Greece, Vilnius, Lithuania

Main goals

The Well@School project builds new knowledge and practices for higher education. The aim of the project is to ensure that primary school teachers, health professionals and curators have the competences required for promoting mental health in school communities, using digital methods.

Target groups

Teachers, professionals at schools, curators.

Description of Intervention

The Well@School project builds new knowledge and practices for higher education. The aim of the project is to ensure that primary school teachers, health professionals and curators have the competences required for promoting mental health in school communities, using digital methods.

School professionals face the challenges related to the mental well-being of school children, in their daily work. New kind of competences are needed so that children and young people can receive support and help for finding ways to cope with various challenges affecting mental health.

Despite the various mental health promotion trainings and interventions, the number of children and young people with mental health challenges is high. In addition, various psychiatric disorders are a major factor in the lives of children and young people worldwide. School professionals need up- to-date information and sufficient understanding of today's needs and means of mental health promotion.

Duration: Start date 01-09-2020. End date 31-08-2023 Resources: Erasmus+ funded project (412,655.00 euro)

Comparison Basis

In difference with the previous two good practices, this project aims at working with teachers and health professionals at schools, thus multiplying the effect of psychological support for young people. As a total in Bulgaria 31 participants were involved (20 teachers, 4 school nurses and 3 school psychologists) of which 25 received certificates after tests. As a total for the project 193 participants were involved, of which 128 received certificates after taking the course and the final exam.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☒ Formal education
- ☐ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☒ international
- ☐ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Evaluation of Outcomes

There is no formal assessment tool; the only evaluation is related to the achievement of personal goals through feedback forms. This means that the success of the personal development process is measured by how well participants meet their own set objectives. Instead of standardized tests or evaluations, participants are encouraged to reflect on their progress and provide feedback on their experiences. These feedback forms allow individuals to assess their growth and development based on the goals they set at the beginning of the program. This personalized approach ensures that the evaluation is directly relevant to each participant's unique journey, fostering a more meaningful and individualized understanding of their achievements and areas for improvement. Focusing on personal goals, the evaluation process becomes a tool for self-reflection and continuous growth.

As a methodology, only FOCUS GROUP: The qualitative method of focus group discussions is preferred in personal development workshops because it allows participants to explore topics in depth, benefit from social interaction and emotional support provided by other members, generates a wide range of ideas and perspectives, and provides real-time feedback for adapting activities. This interactive and engaging approach facilitates the exchange of ideas and provides support in the process of personal growth, adding a human and social dimension that cannot be achieved through other research or inter- action methods.

Key findings: During the training the teachers got acquainted with the scientific and educational content of a digital course, which is prepared within the project, and performed a test of a platform for digital education. The course aims to provide methods for promoting mental health among children and adolescents to teachers and other specialists in the field of education.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

The course is available for free online and anyone can use it. Major target group are teachers, medical personal and school psychologist. Translation to other languages might help in scaling up the practice.

Mixed methodology was used, will the participants needed to successfully finish a final exam.

Additional Information and Conclusions

The initiative empowers teachers, health professionals and school psychologist of promoting mental health using digital tools.

Supporting documents and publications :

<https://wellatschool.turkuamk.fi/arkisto/index.html>

<https://mu-plovdiv.bg/en/training-performed-within-the-wellschool-project/>

<https://deb.tuas.fi/moodle/course/view.php?id=2> Main contact:

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health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and re-generation
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behaviour
- ☒ Addictive behaviour
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☒ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☒ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

L.I.K.E.

Life Investment is the Key to Employment

Bulgaria

Main goals

The project L.I.K.E. looks at the growing incidence of young people in the age group 15 -29 years old with mental health problems in Europe and the inability of the conventional labour problems to address the specific needs of this target group. The project aims to improve the social inclusion and employment of the target group by studying the status of these young people, developing, experimenting and applying an innovative methodology that meets their needs and engages the whole community – relatives, employers and institutions – in the process. In addition, the broad partnership in the consortium works internationally to find common European solutions for social inclusion and quality and sustainable employment for young people with mental health problems. Experts of some of the best-functioning state-owned social systems such as Norway and Iceland will seek to reduce Europe's social and economic disparities and build bilateral co-operation in this area. International studies will present the needed data for the creation of an innovative multidimensional approach for involving the target group – young people with mental health problems in the age group 15-29 years old with specific regard to the Roma population. Through the creation of "Hidden Likes" Houses – centres for support, communication and training.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☒ international
- ☐ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Target groups

Young vulnerable people age 15 to 29 years old, including Roma population.

Description of Intervention

The target group – young people in the age group 15–29-year-olds incl. volunteers specifically between the age of 24 and 29 – faces complex challenges that are not covered by the conventional employment programs for people with disabilities. These people experience difficulties in social inclusion and mental health problems that traditional employment measures do not take into account. Uncertainty and exclusion are major barriers to job search, on the one hand, and social stigma and lack of information are sufficient reasons from the perspective of the employers on the other.

The project, through the identified problem in Bulgaria, seeks a new pan-European solution for achieving sustainable employment for the target group. A complex, integrative, multidisciplinary approach will be created and implemented to attract and motivate the target group and build

positive expectations and sustainable attitudes towards inclusion in life and employment. Through several factors, the “Hidden Likes” innovation program is aimed at increasing the confidence in the target youths and thus provoking their inclusion, activation and support on the labor market, with regard on to the specificity of Roma participants. The Hidden Likes Houses will create a space for professionals, NEETs and their relatives to work together to remove the trust and integration of the target group into the work environment. This house of young people, which will be built in Bulgaria and will after evaluation, in three more partner countries, will be developed on three levels:

1. Recognition of present isolation through motivation and positive emphasis on the individual qualities of each individual through digital technologies and social networks;
2. Provision of psychological and social support through communication, volunteering, healthy lifestyle, achieving emotional stability, work with families;
3. Provision of support when looking for internships or employment through training of employers, realizing of contacts, and monitoring in the first year of work.

Thus, as the metaphor of “hidden likes” suggests, the centre will focus on exposing the hidden qualities of the targeted youth to the community and building confidence in them. The multidimensional methodology will combine a set of support mechanisms to motivate, engage and support the target youth through the whole process.

This method implies an innovative understanding of one of the most common problems in modern Europe, yet a sphere that lacks sufficient research. By analysing the specific needs of the target group, developing a multidimensional solution to the problem and applying it to target youth, their families and friends, as well as future employers, the project offers a comprehensive solution to the problem. Its successful implementation creates the basis for the development of a common European framework to address the problem and thus provides a global solution not only for the labour market but also for society as a whole.

The work package aims to create a detailed perspective on the positioning of the target group on the labour market, the opportunities they have and the challenges they face, and to adapt a working mechanism to engage the target group and provide more information to employers on the special needs and the unique qualities of these people. Through continuous work with NEETs on mental health issues, their friends, families and future employers, a broad range of research issues need to be addressed to create an innovative strategy in this area. In particular, the research phase work package will include: conducting interviews and disseminating questionnaires among NEET and their relatives; creating focus groups; close cooperation with partners, with a particular focus on the experience of partners from Norway and Iceland on the ground; conducting a national survey in Bulgaria and local studies in Latvia, Hungary and Ireland; creating data analysis and a five-step study report: interests, wishes / expectations, worries, attitudes and benefits.

The expertise of our Norwegian and Icelandic partners is to serve as evidence of a detailed and objective study. Representing one of the best social systems in modern Europe and with a special focus on research and analysis, our partners from Northern Europe will make a valuable contribution to the overall design and implementation of the project. The completion of in-depth research is to create a basis for 1) the development of an innovative multidimensional methodology to improve the performance of the target group on the labour market; and 2) the conduction of information campaigns among employers on the specifics of the target group and the popularization of the topic as a whole. We are planning to create a mechanism to integrate NEETs into the labour market and society as a whole, which will include both soft and harsher solutions to the problem. By providing therapeutic services, mentoring, education, and second-chance

opportunities, people at the Hidden Likes Houses will develop a wide range of social and practical skills that will make them experience social inclusion. Individual meetings of NEET and their relatives with our specialists and volunteers, along with the promotion of a healthier lifestyle, close to nature and the outside world, on the other hand, will create the necessary environment for the experience of personal growth and harmony. Through the study and the creation of an innovative interdisciplinary method in this area, the project will improve the employment situation among the target group and thus provide a basis for a better informed and socially oriented society.

Transition employment phase

This work package specifically addresses strategies for activating and improving motivation among young people with mental health problems in the labour market. In the core is a creation of “Hidden Likes Youth House” for 3 years in Bulgaria and for 16 months in Latvia, Hungary and Ireland. After completing the study and creating an interdisciplinary method, the project will be promoted among target group members to motivate them to join the program. After having developed a wealth of experience in this field, the leading and partner organizations in the project have already come to the conclusion of the most important factors that influence young people’s decision to start work. These include a pleasant work atmosphere, an opportunity to get positive feedback and emotional support, good communication with colleagues and the management team. Our experience also proves that opportunities for volunteering and internship are the first step towards employment and labor activation. Due to all these reasons the project aims to create a variety of activities to engage the target youths and help them build better social and work skills.

We believe that integration and independence are two vital principles for achieving these goals. People with mental health problems need to feel as an integral part of the community but at the same time be motivated to develop as individuals. That is why in this work package we will focus specifically on working with mentors, volunteers and professionals to create the necessary psychological base to provoke social engagement and activation in the target group. Working with employers, on the other hand, will aim to improve the information they have about the target group and to create a space for understanding on the labour market and society as a whole. Particularly the activities in this work package include: conferences and individual meetings with volunteers who will share how does volunteering help your individual growth; sharing practices; undergoing creative and sports tasks; promoting a healthier lifestyle; work in nature – gardening and working with animals; participation in creative workshops; working with friends and family; meeting with employers – all this is being done at the Hidden Likes Houses, youth centers for providing a safe environment for young people with mental health problems, their relatives, mentors, specialists. Completing all of these activities ensures that the circle is closed and all steps are taken in the process of motivation, inclusion, and self-realization. Thus, the project will provide all the necessary prerequisites for improving the employment status of the target group and increasing the number of persons affected by social inclusion. Finally, its results will be carefully analysed, using the expertise of our Italian partner in the sphere of social research, with the aim of providing clear evaluation on the methodology and the possibilities for its implementation on a global level.

Employment phase

The final phase of the project is aimed at providing ongoing support to the target group – youths with mental health problems – in the process of finding work and internships and beyond. The target youths – young people in the age group 15-29 years old, who experience mental health problems, and 10% of whom are part of the Roma population, will receive support in communicating with potential employers and developing professional skills before starting their careers. Moreover, they will continue to be part of the program and receive the necessary mentoring and assistance from specialists during the first year of their professional experience. In this way, people who have experienced serious psychological traumas in the past will be led in their

path as independent, active and socially committed young leaders.

On the other hand, this final phase will ensure that the innovative methodology, developed through the creation of the Hidden Likes Houses, is promoted and evaluated on an international level in order to increase transnational cooperation on the labour market and to provide innovative approaches to reducing youth unemployment. To achieve this, participating organizations will hold conferences, prepare reports, and develop a European platform to exchange good practices and support in this area. This final evaluation will give answers on the mechanisms for global implementation of the methodology and the results from the program. The online platform, on the other hand, will create conditions for direct and long-lasting communication between former, current NEETs, mentors, specialists and employers. In that way, the project will have impact not only for the current development of the participants, but also for their confidence and health from then on. This will ensure a global solution to one of the taboo issues and most important problems of modern Europe – the mental health of young people. After all the phases of the project in total over 1300 young people will be involved not only as a direct beneficiary but also as volunteers in the project activities and around 1040 of them are direct target groups – young people with mental health problems between 25 – 29 years old who are not working and not studying inc. 10 % Roma.

Timeframe: 2019 - 2023.

Resources: The “Life Investment is the Key to Employment” project is funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment.

Evaluation of Outcomes

The Italian partner in the project Codici Social Cooperative were engaged with the evaluation of the program. The methods they used were:

- Synthetic logical framework for the monitoring of output and outcome indicators - A synthetic logical framework was created to monitor the progress of the activities run in the HLH. It was inspired by the indicators agreed upon by the project partners. The indicators were transferred into an Excel file and administered regularly to the project partners to monitor the advancement of the activities.
- Online interviews with the project managers of the project partner;
- Field visits in the partners' countries

During the field visits, Codici's research team spent from 3 to 5 days in each country, visiting the places and spaces where the LIKE activities were run and collecting data through collective and individual interviews with the main stakeholders such as organisations' directors, project managers, coordinators, operators and beneficiaries.

An outcome questionnaire was administered to the beneficiaries entering the employment phase. A quantitative outcome questionnaire was created to collect data about the outcomes of the transition phase. Specifically, the questionnaire measured desired outcomes of the LIKE project, such as social inclusion, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and ability to define life and professional goals..

Methodology

During the project's course two pieces of research were conducted. The first one was aimed at exploring the quality of life, health, satisfaction, interests, desires, anxieties and attitudes. The methodology used included one quantitative and two qualitative types of surveys. Three basic research methods were applied: 1) field study with NEETs, 2) focus group with employers, and 3)

in-depth interviews with families.

The second research was aimed at evaluating the impact of COVID-19 on NEETs. The methodology included a randomized questionnaire survey.

Key findings

The lack of sufficient financial resources to meet daily needs forces young people to delay separation from parents. As other studies show, poverty among children and young people is directly related to parent poverty – this is the so-called 'intergenerational poverty' or 'intergenerational transmission of poverty'. The reasons for poverty have to do with lack of employment and income from parents, lack of education or illness. We managed to obtain a variety of opinions from employers, as participants in focus group and interviews represented various industries and businesses of all sizes.

Due shortage of workforce, the criteria and requirements which newcomers have to meet are lower than before. Some employers tend to give a chance to each job applicant able to meet minimal qualification requirements, i.e. in most cases completed primary education. Employers believe the absence of goals for work among NEETs to be a major issue. Employers find it hard to identify the best features of such employees, especially if they have already been stigmatized due to illness, previous career failure, low education, or other.

Challenges

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic caused certain limitations in conducting activities on site. The modification applied was in alignment with the existing measures at that moment – overall, greater emphasis was put on individual sessions, and career consulting while the group activities were conducted with fewer people, and when it was possible and the weather was nice, the activities took place outside. All people wore masks during the sessions and all of the professional were vaccinated.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

It was adapted quite successfully in three countries – Bulgaria, Latvia and Hungary. The program is flexible.

Additional Information and Conclusions

The initiative contributes to resilience development among young people by equipping them with essential life skills, leadership abilities, active community engagement and offering a safe space to develop themselves personal and professional. The program builds strong support networks at regional level, fosters a sense of belonging, and promotes personal growth enhancing the resilience of young participants empowering them to overcome different life obstacles.

Overall assessment:

By providing tailored support services and fostering vocational skills development, the project succeeded in empowering participants to overcome barriers to employment and achieve sustainable integration into the labour market.

By breaking down barriers to employment and promoting mental health awareness, the project lays the groundwork for greater social cohesion and economic prosperity. Moreover, the skills and resilience gained by project participants are likely to have a ripple effect, empowering them to contribute meaningfully to society and inspiring others facing similar challenges to seek help and support. Ultimately, the project's success represents a significant step towards building a more equitable and inclusive society for all.

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health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☐ Personal education, knowledge
- ☐ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☐ Stress management and re-generation
- ☒ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behaviour
- ☒ Addictive behaviour
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☐ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☐ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

Czech Republic

e-Lektra Society for All (SOFA)

Czech Republic

Main goals

To raise awareness about trauma: to inform educators and professionals about how trauma affects children's health and development.

Provide effective support practices: To introduce and teach participants effective methods for working with traumatized children to help improve their resilience and overall well-being.

Create a safe environment: To help educators and caregivers create an environment that is safe and supportive for children.

Support in the context of conflict and displacement: specifically focus on supporting children affected by war and forced displacement.

Integration into the Czech context: Provide practical information and materials specific to the legislative and social context of the Czech Republic.

Why the programme was created

Growing number of traumatized children: statistical data shows that trauma affects many children, negatively affecting their education and social inclusion.

Lack of specific knowledge: Educators and professionals often lack sufficient knowledge and skills to effectively manage trauma in children.

Global challenges: Current global events such as war and forced displacement increase the need for specialised support for traumatised children.

Promoting children's mental health: the programme is part of a broader effort to improve children's mental health in the country. International cooperation.

Target groups

The course is intended for teachers and all professionals working with children and young people in general. Teachers can use in practice with children who have had a traumatic experience.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☐ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☒ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Description of Intervention

Duration: 09/2022-12/2024

Funding: The Czech Savings Bank Foundation; WHO Office in the Czech Republic

This online course consists of videos, interactive exercises and case studies that raise awareness of trauma and its impact on children's health and development. The course also introduces effective approaches to support them. It was developed through international collaboration of trauma experts, while respecting the specific needs of the Czech environment. The overall course consists of four modules originating in the USA, which have been translated into English and supplemented with practical information for the Czech context. In cooperation with foreign partners, SOFA has created a fifth module focusing on trauma related to war and forced displacement. The course is designed to be used globally.

Time consuming and certification:

The entire course takes approximately 3 to 5 hours to complete, depending on the extent of use of the accompanying materials. The course can be interrupted at any time and returned to later. Upon successful completion of the course and short quizzes, you will receive a verification email that also serves as a certificate of completion.

Availability:

The course is available on the Strong Resilient Youth website. COURSE CONTENTS

Module 1: Be a Support for Children - Applying a Trauma-Friendly Approach

- Basic information about trauma and its manifestations in children and young people.
- The importance of a trauma sensitive approach.
- The 4P (Observe, Empower, Support, Assist) and 3Z (Calm, Focus, Engage) techniques.
- Caring for the personal wellbeing of educators and carers.

Module 2: Fundamentals of supporting the development of resilience to trauma

- The impact of negative childhood experiences on children and young people.
- Integrating a trauma sensitive approach into work with children.
- Promoting children's strengths and resilience.
- Specifics of the reporting obligation in the Czech Republic (additional annex).

Module 3: How to address collective traumatic events with children and young people.

- The impact of trauma on different groups, including children.
- Social inequalities and unconscious biases.
- Collective traumatic events and their impact on children and young people.

Module 4: Dealing with trauma with children, families and carers

- Applying a trauma respectful approach in communication with carers and families.
- The importance of trusting relationships.
- Activities to review and practice techniques.

- The importance of self-care for educators and caregivers.

Module 5: Trauma in the context of conflict and displacement

- The impact of war conflict and forced displacement on children and their families. Tips for communicating with traumatized people.
- Strategies to overcome this type of trauma.

Comparison Basis

The course was developed in the United States and this Czech version was prepared in cooperation with McKinsey Health Institute and Cincinnati Children's. The original intention was to completely adapt and localize the e-learning. However, we have not found a similar course with similar parameters that would be implemented in the Czech Republic.

Evaluation of Outcomes

Evaluating the Effectiveness of a Trauma-Informed Approach Course for Educators

This report details the positive impact of a trauma-informed approach course designed for educators. The evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to assess the course's effectiveness.

Strong Participant Satisfaction and Impact:

A survey of 66 participants revealed high satisfaction with the course content and its influence on their work. Participants reported successfully applying their newly acquired knowledge to create a safer and more supportive environment for children.

Increased Awareness and Dissemination:

The course significantly increased the awareness and sensitivity of education staff towards childhood trauma. This trauma-sensitive approach was successfully disseminated to a wider range of professionals, positively influencing the overall atmosphere in educational settings.

Measuring Success: A Multi-Faceted Approach Quantitative Methods:

- **Satisfaction Survey:** A pre- and post-course survey gauged participant satisfaction and the course's impact on their work.

- **Measuring Impact:** Statistical analysis of the survey results quantified improvements in awareness and application of a trauma-informed approach.

Qualitative Methods:

- **Interviews and Focus Groups:** In-depth interviews and focus groups provided deeper insights into participant experiences and the specific benefits gained from the course.
- **Practice Stories:** Real-world examples were collected and analyzed to demonstrate how the course aided educators in practical situations.
- **Clarity:** The e-learning's clarity received an average rating, with some participants finding it less than clear.
- **Usability:** Perceived usability in the Czech context was rated slightly above average.
- **Pace:** While most participants found the course intuitive, opinions on ideal completion time varied. Some suggested shortening the e-learning portion to one week, while others preferred a longer timeframe.

Conclusion:

This evaluation demonstrates the success of the trauma-informed approach course in enhancing educators' knowledge and skills. The course fosters a more supportive environment for children and has the potential for wider dissemination within educational settings. Addressing the identified areas for improvement in the e-learning component can further enhance the course's effectiveness.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

This practice can be well adapted and extended to a different level by localizing the course content for different cultural and legal contexts, adapting it to the specific needs of different target groups (e.g. educators, social workers, parents), and adding interactive elements and certifications to motivate participants to complete the course; in addition, pilot testing and feedback will help optimize the course for global use.

The course benefits from the expertise of a dedicated team. This team comprises educators, psychologists, social workers, and other professionals with knowledge in trauma and education. Their combined knowledge facilitates tailoring course content to the specific needs of diverse target groups.

While there are currently no recommendations for adaptation in other settings, the strategies

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☐ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☐ Personal education, knowledge
- ☐ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and re-generation
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behaviour
- ☐ Addictive behaviour
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☐ Personal social networks
- ☐ Empowerment/participation
- ☒ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

outlined above offer a roadmap for successful dissemination of this valuable course.

Additional Information and Conclusions

In collaboration with an international team of experts, a free online course has been developed on a trauma-informed approach. The course is aimed at educational staff and all professionals working with children and young people in general. The course deepens awareness of trauma and its impact on children's thriving and introduces effective ways to support children with traumatic experiences.

An online course full of videos, interactive exercises and case scenarios that raises awareness of trauma and its impact on children's health and development, and introduces effective practices to support them. This course is the result of an international collaboration of trauma experts, respectful approach, and consists of four modules originally from the USA, which have been translated into English and supplemented with practical information for the Czech context. SOFA, in collaboration with international partners, has developed a fifth module focusing on trauma in the context of war and forced displacement. The e-learning is designed for global use.

The entire course takes approximately 3 to 5 hours to complete, depending on the extent of use of the accompanying materials. You can interrupt the course at any time and come back to it later. Upon successful completion of the course and completion of the short quizzes, you will receive a verification email that also serves as a certificate of completion.

The goal of the project is for all educators and other professionals working with children and youth to learn the basics of a trauma-informed approach, create a safe environment, build resilience, and work with trauma in children and adolescents.

On the website, <https://www.societyforall.cz/e-lektra> you will find downloadable materials -

- Annex to e-Lektra e-learning
- Evaluation of e-learning: survey of course participants
- e-Lektra: Registration Guide
- e-Lektra: Discussion Group Guide
- e-Lektra: Workbook

The course is available on the web at <https://www.strongresilientyouth.org/register-home-czech> and it's free.

PorT

Society for All (SOFA)

Czech Republic

Main goals

The main goal of the PorT project is to create an environment in schools and other institutions that provides support to children with traumatic experiences and helps to mitigate their consequences. This goal is being pursued through PorT's Trauma Respectful Approach Institute, which brings together experts from different fields and an advisory team of young adults with traumatic experiences. The project focuses on creating a training program for education and social service workers that promotes children's self-regulation skills, provides training in de-escalation techniques, and encourages interdisciplinary collaboration. Another goal is to expand the program throughout the Czech Republic and abroad through training of trainers and availability of materials in multiple countries and languages. In this way, the PorT project aims to strengthen a trauma-responsive approach that emphasises safety, trust, support, belonging and respect for each individual, thus contributing to better care for children with traumatic experiences.

Target groups

Children with traumatic experiences: the project focuses on providing support and mitigating the effects of trauma for children who have experienced difficult life situations.

Teachers and other school staff who come into contact with children and can be key actors in providing support and assistance to children with traumatic experiences.

Social service workers: Social service workers are also included in the target group as they often have contact with children who have experienced trauma and can provide support and assistance in their recovery process.

Peer Advisory Team: The project involves working with young adults who have themselves experienced traumatic events in childhood and can provide valuable information and perspectives to better understand the needs of children with traumatic experiences.

Trainers: The project focuses on training trainers who will be able to disseminate the knowledge and skills gained through the program to a broader population of education and social service professionals across the country.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☒ Formal education
- ☐ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☒ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Description of Intervention

Duration: 04/2022 -03/2024

Funding: The project is funded by the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV) of the European Union. These funds are used to finance

The PorT project - Understanding Trauma - focuses on providing support to children with traumatic experiences in schools and other institutions. Its activities and strategies include:

Building a strong team of experts: the project started with the creation of a multidisciplinary team of experts from different fields such as psychology, social work and education. This team is key to developing strategies and materials to support children with traumatic experiences.

Involvement of a peer advisory team: young adults with childhood traumatic experiences are actively involved in the project. Their experiences and perspectives are a valuable resource for understanding children's needs and developing relevant support materials.

Supervision: the project has oversight of the quality of outputs and implementation of best practice through national and international supervision teams. This ensures that the project stays on track and uses the best available methods.

Creation of a training programme: A training programme for education and social services staff has been developed and implemented. This programme provides practical tools and techniques for working with children with traumatic experiences and supporting their self-regulation.

The project plans to expand throughout the Czech Republic and abroad. This includes training of trainers and translation of materials into other countries and languages.

Creation and distribution of support materials: The project creates and distributes various materials such as infographics, leaflets and tools for education and social service workers. These materials provide practical tips and procedures for supporting children with traumatic experiences.

Comparison Basis

Other initiatives aimed at providing support to children with traumatic experiences and training for education and social services staff can be considered for comparison with the PorT project. However, we have not found a similar course with similar parameters that would be implemented in the Czech Republic.

Evaluation of Outcomes

The PorT Project: Understanding Trauma and Its Impact on Children

This document details the PorT project, designed to address the needs of children with traumatic experiences. The project aimed to achieve success through a multi-faceted approach, focusing on:

- **Increased Staff Awareness and Behavior:** Equipping education and social services staff with the knowledge and skills to better understand and support children who have experienced

trauma.

- **Improved Living Conditions for Children:** Creating a safer and more supportive environment for children to heal and thrive.
- **Networking and Collaboration:** Fostering collaboration between educational and social service providers to ensure a comprehensive support system for children.
- **Achievement of Project Objectives:** Delivering on the project's stated goals and ensuring measurable outcomes.

Evaluation Methodology: A Comprehensive Approach

The PorT project employed a rigorous evaluation program to assess its effectiveness. This program incorporated both quantitative and qualitative methods:

- **Quantitative Analysis:** Measured quantifiable aspects like training attendance, participant numbers, and resource distribution.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** Provided deeper insights into staff awareness changes, perceptions of support materials, and networking impact.
- **Objective Achievement Evaluation:** Assessed the extent to which project goals were met and expected outcomes achieved.
- **Participant Feedback:** Gathered insights from staff and children on their experiences and project benefits.
- **Benchmarking:** Compared project results against established best practices to evaluate success and milestone achievement.
- **Interim and Final Evaluation:** Conducted evaluations throughout the project and at its completion to enable continuous improvement.

Positive Outcomes for Children

The PorT project yielded significant positive impacts on the target group of children with traumatic experiences. Key findings include:

- **Increased Staff Awareness and Understanding:** Educational and social services staff demonstrated a heightened awareness of children's needs, leading to improved support and tailored interventions.
- **Enhanced Self-Regulation Skills:** Children learned strategies for self-regulation and better management of stressful situations at school.
- **More Supportive School Environments:** Schools became more supportive and safer, fostering a sense of belonging in children.
- **Reduced Stigma:** The project helped reduce the stigma associated with trauma, allowing for better integration into

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☐ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☐ Personal education, knowledge
- ☐ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and regeneration
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behaviour
- ☐ Addictive behaviour
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☐ Personal social networks
- ☐ Empowerment/participation
- ☒ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

school life and society.

Overall, the PorT project serves as a successful model for supporting children with traumatic experiences. The project's comprehensive approach, combined with a robust evaluation methodology, demonstrates the positive impact achievable through collaboration and targeted interventions.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

The PorT practice can be successfully applied to other levels through a flexible approach and the involvement of staff at all levels. Key strategies include training and skills development, networking with other organizations, disseminating best practices, and promoting policies that support a trauma-informed approach. Such an approach enables effective transfer of best practice and maximises the positive impact on target groups.

To implement the PorT project, financial, human, material, technological and support resources are required to enable the successful delivery of training, consultation and development of training materials.

It is important to involve professionals who can help young people to feel safe and able to talk about the challenges and obstacles they face in their lives.

Additional Information and Conclusions

The aim of the project was to provide a clear theoretical framework for understanding the basics of a trauma-informed approach and to provide practical examples of regulatory techniques and practices to build self-regulation in children. The project also taught how to appropriately set up supportive environments within schools and social services and promoted the development of interdisciplinary collaboration in the care of children at risk. Through practical training, it promoted the acquisition of functional techniques and methods in working with children with challenging behaviour that can also be used to promote their own wellbeing. Furthermore, through quotes and authentic voice recordings, he introduced the feelings of young adults who had gone through negative experiences in childhood.

Security plan - infographics

Stress response activation level or what is my state? Stress and its consequences

How my engine is running

A leaflet about the PorT project - understanding trauma

Tools to help children calm down and focus How to recognise a child at risk.

Three steps to managing challenging behaviour find here <https://www.societyforall.cz/port>

RRRR

Society for All (SOFA)

Czech Republic

Main goals

The RRRR (Respect, Diversity, Equality, Resilience) project aims to promote the mental health of children and adolescents through the implementation of comprehensive educational programmes. These programmes are oriented towards socio-emotional learning and the prevention of violence in close relationships. School is considered a key place for the formation of mental health, respectful relationships and violence prevention.

Implement social-emotional learning into the school curriculum, thereby promoting the development of emotional intelligence, self-awareness and empathy among students.

Provide schools with methodologies and tools to help teachers develop students' emotional skills.

To raise awareness of the issue of violence in adolescent relationships.

To provide adolescents with information and competences to recognise and deal with situations involving violence.

To create an environment where violence in relationships is not accepted and where support is provided to victims of violence.

Adapt and implement a set of eight practical social-emotional learning manuals developed in Australia, adapted to the Czech school system.

Involve Czech schools in a comprehensive prevention programme that is compatible with existing and newly planned Framework Education Programmes.

Target groups

The target group is adolescents and young people. The programme is suitable for all primary and secondary schools, but is also suitable for children's homes, low threshold centres and other social services working with adolescents.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☒ Formal education
- ☐ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☐ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☒ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Description of Intervention

Duration: 3/2022–12/2023 **Funding:** EEA Grants 2014-2021

The RRRR project includes several key activities and strategies aimed at promoting the mental health of children and adolescents through socio-emotional learning and the prevention of violence in close relationships.

Eight practical guides on socio-emotional learning, originally developed in Australia, have been adapted by Czech experts for use in Czech schools. These manuals cover topics such as self-knowledge, stress management, building respectful relationships, recognising and expressing emotions, empathy and social awareness. SEL methodologies are integrated into existing and newly planned Framework Education Programmes at all levels of education, from primary to secondary school. Specific lessons and activities are designed to be easily integrated into regular lessons and school activities.

Implementation of the prevention programme "Close Relationships without Violence" Awareness film and workbook:

- The film "Good Everywhere, Best at Home?" It serves as an introduction to the issue of violence in close relationships and is used as a tool for discussion and awareness-raising.
- The workbook "Proof of Love or Proof of Violence?" helps pupils identify different forms of violence and provides practical advice and information.
- Training for teachers and other educational staff is aimed at increasing their competences in the field of violence prevention and working with the topic in the classroom.
- Workshops for students aged 13-19, which include interactive activities, discussions and role-play to help them better understand the issue of violence in relationships and learn how to defend themselves against it and where to seek help.

Comparison Basis

We have not found any implemented initiative that has been successfully implemented in the Czech Republic and achieved similar quality.

Evaluation of Outcomes

The RRRR program's effectiveness was assessed using a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data.

Evaluation Criteria:

- **Participant Knowledge and Attitudes:** The program aimed to increase participants' awareness, skills, and positive attitudes towards partner violence.
- **Help-Seeking Behaviors:** The evaluation assessed participants' ability to identify and access resources for support.
- **School Environment:** Changes in the overall school atmosphere and culture related to partner violence were evaluated.

- **Participant Engagement:** The program's overall engagement and satisfaction levels were measured.
- **Qualitative Methods:** Group interviews and focus groups offered deeper insights into participant experiences and the program's impact.

This comprehensive evaluation approach allowed for a thorough assessment of the RRRR program's success in empowering participants and fostering a more supportive school environment regarding partner violence.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

This practice is highly scalable and adaptable for scaling up to another level, as it provides proven methods and materials that can be adapted to the specific needs and context of the target group. Shared experiences and materials allow for effective transfer of know-how and training of new trainers who can further disseminate the programme. Thanks to its flexibility and modular structure, the programme can be adapted to different learning levels and contexts, increasing its scalability and sustainability.

In order to implement the RRRR programme, funds were needed to develop training materials, train trainers and implement activities. In addition, a key resource was the skilled team of experts and trainers who worked on programme development and implementation. Material resources included the development of methodological manuals, workbooks and other materials for participants.

Additional Information and Conclusions

In general, the RRRR initiative can be seen as a significant contribution to the development of children and adolescents' resilience to violence in partner relationships. The programme provides effective tools to raise awareness, develop socio-emotional skills and promote respectful and safe relationships. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods, it is possible to monitor concrete changes and impacts of the programme, which supports its effectiveness and relevance. It is recommended that the programme be further promoted and disseminated as an effective tool for the prevention of violence in close relationships. More about project: <https://www.societyforall.cz/rrrr>

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☐ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☐ Personal education, knowledge
- ☐ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☐ Stress management and regeneration
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behaviour
- ☐ Addictive behaviour
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☐ Social support structures / services
- ☐ Personal social networks
- ☐ Empowerment/participation
- ☐ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

Project materials:

- Poster How do you feel?

The poster shows 26 emotions. The material is suitable for use in activities aimed at developing children's emotional skills in kindergartens and primary schools.

- Posters for the development of socio-emotional learning - older pupils

The posters are aimed at developing socio-emotional learning. You can use them in communicating with pupils about challenging situations and seeking professional help or managing anger. For secondary school pupils, we provide tips on how to deal with stress before graduation or how to prevent procrastination. In school, poster work can be incorporated into classroom lessons or community circles. Posters are designed for second grade and high school children. The methodological materials have been developed in the framework of a project funded by the EEA Grants 2014-2022

- Posters for the development of socio-emotional learning - younger pupils

The posters are aimed at developing socio-emotional learning. You can use them in communicating with children about emotions and problem solving. In school you can include work with posters in classroom lessons or community circles. The posters are designed for first grade children. The methodological materials have been developed in the framework of a project funded by the EEA Grants 2014-2022.

- Conversation game "How was your day?"

It helps children to reflect on their experiences, opinions and attitudes related not only to their day. The game does not have complex rules, it contains 32 questions that naturally encourage the child's expression and teaches him to get to know himself and others.

- Cards (R)ease in the mind

encourage self-regulation and teach children to be aware of their own body and emotions. They contain 27 activities aimed at calming or activating.

- Evidence of love or violence?

A companion booklet for pupils to the awareness-raising film Everywhere Good, Home Best? provides additional information, processing tasks and discussion prompts.

Safe school

Safe School as part of WHO

Czech Republic

Main goals

Creating a safe environment in and around the school:

Improving the physical safety of students, teachers and other members of the school community through improvements to infra- structure such as playgrounds, gymnasiums, stairwells, etc.

Implementing and maintaining safety measures and procedures that minimize the risk of injuries and accidents.

Incorporating safety education into school practices:

Integrating topics related to safety, injury prevention, and risky behaviours into the school curriculum.

Educating pupils on first aid, traffic education, bullying prevention, personal safety and other important topics.

Increasing student's resilience to risk behaviour:

Providing student's with information and education on negative phenomena such as bullying, drugs, aggression, health and healthy lifestyles.

Strengthening pupils' social skills and their ability to deal effectively with risky situations.

Building a pleasant psychosocial climate at school:

Creating an environment of trust and support between pupils, teachers and other members of the school community.

Promoting cooperation between pupils of different age groups and involving parents in school activities.

Community and teamwork:

Working with local organizations and professionals (e.g., municipal police, Czech Police, Red Cross) to implement safety projects and activities.

Engaging the wider community in initiatives to improve the safety of the school environment.

Long-term sustainability of the project:

Regular evaluation and updating of the project to ensure its effectiveness and continued benefit to the school community.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☒ Formal education
- ☐ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☐ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☒ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Providing ongoing support and resources to sustain the safety improvements achieved.

Target groups

- **Students:**
All age groups of pupils, from kindergarten to primary school.
Students with specific learning needs (e.g. individual education plans, speech and dyslexia clubs).
- **Teachers and educational staff:**
Teachers of all subjects and grades who implement and support safety measures and educational programs.
Special educators and other professionals who provide support to pupils with special needs.
- **Parents and families of students:**
Parents and guardians who are informed about safety measures and involved in school activities. Families who work with the school to provide a safe environment for their children.
- **School community:**
School management and administrative staff who are responsible for implementing and administering the project.
Technical staff who are involved in the modification and maintenance of the school infrastructure.
- **Local community and organizations:**
Municipal police, police, Red Cross, secondary medical and educational schools, Fire Department (**Fire and** Rescue Service) and other local organizations that collaborate on safety projects and educational activities.

Civic associations, libraries and leisure organisations that support community safety activities.
- **Safety and prevention experts:**
Experts from the Injury Prevention Centre (IPC) at the 2nd Faculty of Medicine of Charles University and Motol University Hospital who provide expert support and consultation.
- **The general public:**
The community around the school who can participate in public events and be informed about safety measures and activities.

Description of Intervention

Duration: 2001 - ongoing Funding:

- Financial support from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports or other state bodies that provide subsidies and grants for education and prevention projects.
- Funding from the budget of individual schools allocated for the implementation of safety measures and educational programmes.
- Contributions from partner organizations and sponsors that support the Safe Schools Project.

Creating a secure environment:

- **Needs and Risk Assessments:** Regularly identifying potential hazards within and around the school through specific projects.
- **Safety Improvements:** Implementing measures to enhance physical safety, such as modifications in playgrounds, gymnasiums, and stairwells.

Education and Awareness:

- **Curriculum Integration:** Incorporating crucial topics like first aid, traffic safety, bullying prevention, and personal safety into the school curriculum.
- **Specialized Programs:** Utilizing established programs like "Safe Classroom," "Safe School," and "Safe Routes to School" for comprehensive safety education.

Prevention and Outreach:

- **Regular Events:** Organizing events on topics like traffic safety, first aid, bullying prevention, and anti-smoking initiatives.
- **Lectures and Project Days:** Hosting lectures, talks, and project days focused on preventing risky behaviors (e.g., bullying, drug use, aggression, healthy lifestyle choices).

Collaboration and Partnerships:

- **Community Involvement:** Collaborating with organizations like the Municipal Police, Czech Republic Police, Red Cross, Fire Brigade, Jaspis Civic Association, and others.
- **Expert Engagement:** Involving safety and prevention professionals in educational activities and prevention programs.

Student Participation:

- **Pupil Parliaments:** Creating student parliaments that empower students to participate in safety decision-making.
- **Peer-to-Peer Initiatives:** Developing projects where older students design and implement safety activities for younger pupils.

Maintaining Safe Infrastructure:

- **Investment and Maintenance:** Planning and implementing maintenance and investment projects to improve school facility safety (e.g., playground renovation, installation of safety features).
- **Regular Inspections:** Conducting regular inspections and assessments of the school infrastructure's condition.

Community and Teamwork:

- **Collaborative Efforts:** Encouraging collaboration between the school, parents, and the broader community on safety initiatives.

- **Joint Events:** Organizing joint events that involve parents and the local community
- **Project Updates:** Updating projects based on lessons learned and evaluation results.

Resources for Success:

Financial Resources:

- **Government Grants:** Securing financial support from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports or other state bodies offering subsidies and grants for educational and preventive projects.
- **School Budgets:** Utilizing funding allocated from individual school budgets for implementing safety measures and educational programs.
- **Partnerships and Sponsorships:** Leveraging contributions from partner organizations and sponsors who support the Safe Schools Project.

Human Resources:

- **Project Team:** Dedicated project staff, including coordinators, teachers, teaching assistants, and other professionals.
- **Volunteers and Parents:** Engaging volunteers and parents to assist in organizing and implementing project activities.
- **Expert Collaboration:** Collaborating with professionals like doctors, psychologists, social workers, and other safety and prevention specialists.

Material Resources:

- **Safety Features:** Obtaining material resources for implementing safety measures, such as safety features in playgrounds, gyms, and stairwells.
- **Educational Materials:** Utilizing educational materials and tools to support safety education programs and activities.
- **Technology and Equipment:** Leveraging technology and equipment (e.g., computers, printed materials, audio/visual equipment) for communication and organization of project events and campaigns.

By employing this comprehensive approach, the Safe Schools Project fosters a safe and secure learning environment, empowering students to thrive. Through continuous improvement and collaboration, the project's positive impact on school communities is assured.

Comparison Basis

Schools for Peaceful Communities:

This programme focuses on preventing violence and promoting positive behaviour in schools. It provides training, materials and strategies for creating safe and peaceful school environments.

Safe Schools for All:

This initiative focuses on ensuring the safety and security of children in schools, especially those at risk of conflict, disaster or poverty. It provides support and resources for creating safe school environments.

Evaluation of Outcomes

Fostering a Safe and Supportive School Environment: A Multifaceted Approach

This document outlines a comprehensive strategy for enhancing safety and well-being within the school environment. It encompasses five key areas:

1. Building a Secure Foundation:

- **Reducing Injuries and Accidents:** Implement measures to minimize accidents in and around the school, such as improving playground safety, enhancing lighting, and installing appropriate traffic signage.
- **Strengthening Infrastructure:** Invest in safety features for playgrounds, gyms, and stairwells to create a physically secure environment.

2. Empowering Students Through Education:

- **Safety Skills Development:** Equip students with crucial safety knowledge and skills, including first aid, accident prevention, bullying intervention, and cybersecurity awareness.
- **Social Conflict Resolution:** Foster strong social skills to enable students to handle conflict constructively and prevent violence.

3. Promoting Student Well-Being:

- **Holistic Health and Well-being:** Promote overall student health and well-being within the school environment.
- **Healthy Lifestyles:** Encourage healthy lifestyles and positive eating habits among students.

4. Engaging the School Community:

- **Collaborative Action:** Promote active participation of parents, teachers, administrators, and community members in safety initiatives and projects.
- **Strengthening Partnerships:** Foster collaboration between schools, parents, local authorities, and non-profit organizations to leverage combined resources and expertise.

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☐ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☐ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☐ Stress management and re-generation
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behavior
- ☐ Addictive behavior
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☐ Social support structures / services
- ☐ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☐ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

5. Ensuring Long-Term Success:

- **Sustainable Practices:** Implement strategies for the long-term operation and effectiveness of safety measures and programs.
- **Needs-Based Development:** Continually develop and update projects based on ongoing assessments and evolving needs of the school community.

Evaluation and Recognition:

- **International Recognition:** Strive for inclusion in the WHO International Safe Schools Network, a mark of excellence in school safety.
- **Awards and Certifications:** Recognize and celebrate achievements by securing awards and certifications for attaining high standards in safety and prevention.

Evaluation Methods:

A mixed-methods approach is employed to comprehensively assess the program's impact:

Quantitative Methods:

- **Statistical Data Collection:** Track injuries, incidents, conflicts, etc., to measure overall school safety.
- **Questionnaire Surveys:** Gather quantitative data on awareness, attitudes, and behaviors regarding school safety from students, parents, and teachers.
- **Knowledge Testing:** Conduct tests or examinations to assess students' knowledge of safety and prevention measures.

Qualitative Methods:

- **In-Depth Interviews:** Gain deeper insights into attitudes, experiences, and safety-related needs by interviewing members of the school community.
- **Observation:** Observe the school environment and student behavior to understand the school's safety culture.
- **Document Analysis:** Analyze school policies, safety plans, incident reports, and other relevant documents.

Mixed Methods:

- **Combined Questionnaires and Interviews:** Utilize questionnaires for quantitative data followed by interviews for deeper understanding.
- **Data Triangulation:** Compare and cross-reference quantitative and qualitative data to gain a holistic view.
- **Participatory Approach:** Involve the school community in the evaluation process and interpretation of results to enhance engagement and confidence in the findings.

Desired Outcomes:

The program aims to achieve the following positive outcomes:

- Improved student knowledge and safety skills
- Reduced number of accidents and incidents
- Enhanced student social and emotional well-being
- Increased parental and community involvement
- Creation of a positive and respectful school environment
- Strengthened teacher capacity in preventing and addressing safety concerns

(Up)Scalability and allocation

- Tailor content and activities to meet the specific needs of the level (e.g. high school, workplace)
- Establish collaboration with other institutions and organisations at that level.
- Focus on the specific health and safety challenges of this level.

We will involve other target groups, such as staff, parents or the wider community. We will use modern technology and communication tools to disseminate information effectively. We will implement a monitoring and evaluation system to track the success of the program.

Additional Information and Conclusions

The general assessment of the contribution of the Safe Schools initiative to the development of resilience is positive. The initiative provides a comprehensive framework for creating a safe and supportive environment in schools, which contributes to improving students' resilience to various security threats and health risks. The programme promotes not only physical safety but also the social and emotional well-being of pupils, which is key to the overall development of resilience in the school community. Through the involvement of different stakeholders and the implementation of diverse activities and programmes, Safe Schools has the potential to strengthen the prevention of injuries, bullying, aggression and other risky behaviours, thereby contributing to a healthier and safer school environment.

Hungary

AWWWareness

GYIÖT, COMUNE DI TORINO, SEIKLEJATE VENNASKOND, Haminan kaupunki

Liptód, Hungary

Main goals

The AWWWareness project is a youth exchange program aimed at helping young participants recognize the importance of awareness in their lives and collect good practices and guidelines to assist them in leading a more conscious lifestyle. The mission of the project is to empower young people to focus on their mental and physical well-being, emphasizing healthy eating, physical activity, and stress management, while highlighting the growing importance of mental health.

The program also aims to promote environmental awareness by encouraging individual and community efforts toward sustainability, while exploring cultural similarities and differences in environmental practices. In addition, the project fosters media awareness by encouraging responsible social media use, helping participants identify misinformation, and promoting critical thinking and conscious media consumption.

Moreover, the project seeks to inspire active citizenship by motivating youth to engage in social issues and empowering them to become critically thinking, active citizens. By creating a supportive environment where young people can freely express themselves and share their experiences, the program helps them develop initiative-taking skills.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☒ international
- ☐ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Target groups

It was important to select young people who had not previously been involved in an international mobility or participants were young people aged 14-18 from the selected countries (seven young people per country).

In addition, young people aged 18 and over were involved in the programme as team leaders.

Description of Intervention

A preparatory meeting was organized for the group leaders before the exchange to ensure smooth

implementation. This meeting acquainted them with the program, facilitated their roles as facilitators, and allowed them to offer feedback on the developmental diary, which served as a methodological tool to guide the participants' growth and reflection throughout the exchange. This collaborative approach ensured that the project structure was inclusive and catered to the unique needs of each participant.

Awareness themes

Three primary themes — health awareness, environmental awareness, and media literacy — served as the cornerstone of the project. The activities were designed to help participants explore these themes, understand their relevance in different cultural contexts, and develop strategies to incorporate them into their daily lives.

1. **Health awareness:** The health awareness theme focused on both mental and physical well-being. Activities highlighted the importance of nutrition, exercise, and stress management while emphasizing the often-overlooked aspect of mental health. This thematic focus was timely, given the challenges posed by recent global events, including the COVID-19 pandemic. Through workshops, group discussions, and outdoor activities, participants explored how to improve their well-being and gain a deeper understanding of the connection between mental and physical health.
2. **Environmental awareness:** Environmental awareness emphasized the importance of sustainability and the role of individuals and communities in protecting the environment. Participants examined cultural similarities and differences in environmental practices across the participating countries. Workshops and outdoor programs provided practical insights into how individuals and communities can contribute to sustainability through small yet impactful actions.
3. **Media literacy:** Media literacy aimed to equip participants with the skills needed to navigate the digital world responsibly. The workshops covered the recognition of fake news, the credibility of sources, and the responsible use of social media. Participants learned how to discern trustworthy information and reflected on their media consumption habits.

Activities and strategies

Arrival and orientation (Day 1-2)

The first two days of the project were dedicated to welcoming participants and helping them settle in. Upon arrival in Budapest, the group travelled to Liptód, where icebreakers and team-building activities were organized to foster camaraderie. Group rules were established collectively to ensure a respectful and inclusive environment.

Participants were introduced to the Erasmus+ program and the project's objectives, emphasizing the role of youth exchanges in fostering intercultural understanding. The orientation also included sessions on expectations and fears, enabling participants to voice their concerns and aspirations.

Workshops and group work (Days 3-7)

The workshops and group activities were organized thematically:

1. **Group theme workshop I: introduction to themes.** Each thematic group (health, environ-

ment, media literacy) started with an introductory workshop that provided a broad overview of the topic. Facilitators used engaging methods such as discussions, presentations, and creative exercises to establish a foundation for deeper exploration.

2. **Group theme workshop II: personal and community relevance.** The second round of workshops encouraged participants to reflect on how the themes relate to their lives and communities. In the health awareness group, discussions focused on personal health practices and community health initiatives. The environmental group examined local sustainability practices, and the media literacy group analysed social media trends and information dissemination in their communities.
3. **Outdoor programs.** A central element of the AWWWareness project was outdoor activities, which were carefully designed to complement the workshops. The outdoor programs aimed to foster practical skills, encourage teamwork, and deepen the understanding of each theme in a real-world context.
 - **Volunteering day:** Participants organized a volunteering day to refurbish a rest stop along a fairy-tale trail near Liptód. They collected litter, cleaned the area, and painted benches and tables. This activity fostered environmental consciousness and community spirit, as participants also translated poems into their native languages to enrich the trail's cultural diversity.
 - **Outdoor group activities:** The outdoor programs were divided into three groups, each exploring their respective themes through immersive activities:
 - Group I:* Explored the relationship between health and nature, including mind-fulness exercises and physical activities like hiking.
 - Group II:* Focused on environmental sustainability by identifying local plant species.
 - Group III:* Investigated media literacy through nature photography and storytelling, linking digital media skills with environmental awareness.
4. **Group theme workshop III: good practices.** In this workshop, each group delved deeper into practical strategies and tips for enhancing awareness in their respective themes. Participants shared good practices from their cultures and communities, allowing cross-cultural learning. The health awareness group discussed stress management techniques and healthy recipes, while the environmental group highlighted waste reduction practices. The media literacy group shared tools for recognizing misinformation.
5. **Group theme workshop IV: peer communication.** This session focused on strategies to convey awareness messages to peers effectively. Participants created media content such as memes and videos, tailored to each theme, which could be shared online to raise awareness among their peers.
6. **Group theme workshop V: media content creation.** In the final workshop, groups polished their media content, ensuring it was informative and engaging. The collaborative effort led to the creation of sharable videos, memes, and infographics that could easily reach a broader audience through social media.
7. **Presentations and YouthPass.** On the penultimate day, each group presented their work to the rest of the participants, fostering a sense of accomplishment and cross-theme learning. The

presentations were followed by discussions, enabling participants to provide constructive feedback. The YouthPass certificates were distributed, highlighting the skills and competencies gained during the exchange. Facilitators guided participants through reflection exercises, helping them articulate their learning outcomes.

Cultural evenings and free time

Cultural evenings played a pivotal role in fostering intercultural understanding. Each participating country organized an evening dedicated to showcasing their culture through food, music, and games. The evenings were complemented by free time, during which participants could relax, swim, and explore the local area. The Estonian, Finnish, Italian, and Hungarian evenings offered rich cultural exchanges that deepened the bonds among participants.

Weekly evaluation and departure (Day 8-9)

The final days were dedicated to reflection and evaluation. Group leaders facilitated a comprehensive evaluation session, where participants shared their experiences and provided feedback on the program. A weekly evaluation helped identify strengths and areas for improvement, informing future projects.

The group returned to Budapest on the final day for departure, carrying with them not only newfound friendships but also practical strategies and insights into leading more conscious and balanced lives.

The AWWWareness project effectively used a combination of workshops, outdoor activities, and cultural exchanges to foster a holistic understanding of awareness. By structuring the program around health, environmental, and media awareness, the project provided a comprehensive platform for young participants to explore these themes deeply. The strategic blend of theory and practice ensured that the participants could internalize the lessons learned and apply them in their daily lives.

The project's success lies in its ability to create a supportive environment where participants could freely express themselves, learn from one another, and build lasting connections. The media content and developmental diary produced during the project serve as lasting resources, extending the project's impact beyond the immediate group of participants.

The project took place from 17 to 25 July 2022.

The Human Resources team for the project comprised three organizers, responsible for facilitation and logistics coordination, along with four group leaders, each overseeing participants from one country. The project was financed primarily through an Erasmus+ grant, which covered accommodation, meals, travel costs, and materials required for the activities. These materials included art supplies, sports equipment, and digital tools for creating memes, videos, and infographics.

Comparison Basis

Alongside other mental health and community programmes, the specificity of the project's implementation lies in the fact that it targets several dimensions at once. In which each area of

intervention has an equal role, as well as a specific methodology – such as the development diary developed during the project.

Evaluation of Outcomes

The success of the project can be seen in several ways: participants have understood the importance of mental and physical well-being and have learned how to incorporate mindfulness into their daily lives. In addition, a focus on healthy eating, physical activity and stress management, a commitment to the environment and sustainability, and conscious media use have been promoted. The videos and online content produced during the project helped to spread these good practices, and the Volunteer Day not only supported the local community but also reinforced the importance of volunteering in young people. Participants improved their skills, gained new knowledge and broadened their horizons through cultural exchanges, while group leaders and organisations were given new methodological tools to raise young people's awareness.

There was no systemic impact assessment carried out yet. However, there was regular communication between participants during the sessions - throughout the programme. In addition to feedback from project staff, the young people involved in the project have improved in a number of areas (for example social skills, self-confidence).

Given that no concrete impact assessment has been carried out, it is only possible to rely on the experience of the organisers and the feedback of the participants. This includes the exchange of experiences, working together as a community, developing empathic insights and mental resilience.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

The practices used in AWWWareness are highly adaptable and scalable to other levels, for the following reasons:

A wide range of topics: the programme focused on health awareness, environmental awareness and media awareness, which can generate a wide range of interest among different age groups. These themes are relevant at other levels, so similar youth exchanges can be easily adapted and implemented with different age groups.

Development diary: The development diary developed during the project will support the application of the methods in other contexts.

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☐ Stress management and regeneration
- ☒ Exercise/physical activity
- ☒ Nutritional behaviour
- ☐ Addictive behaviour
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☒ Personal social networks
- ☐ Empowerment/participation
- ☐ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

The international nature of the programme makes it important to use an international network of contacts. It is also important to involve experts who have the experience and knowledge needed to coordinate and develop the activities.

The use of methods to support the physical and mental well-being of the young people involved plays an important role in all implementations. The project was preceded by a preliminary meeting between the team leaders of the partner organisations to ensure a smooth implementation. This is a crucial step in the adaptation process.

Additional Information and Conclusions

The AWWWareness Youth Exchange primarily aimed to develop resilience among young participants by fostering community spirit, enhancing teamwork skills, and promoting critical awareness. The programme empowered youth through thematic groups focused on health awareness, environmental consciousness, and media literacy, emphasizing the importance of mental and physical well-being, sustainability, and responsible media use. Workshops and outdoor activities formed the core of the project.

The health awareness theme highlighted the significance of healthy eating, regular exercise, and stress management, with a particular focus on mental health. Participants explored strategies for improving well-being and understanding the connection between mental and physical health.

In the environmental awareness group, participants discussed how individuals and communities can positively impact the planet. They examined cultural differences and similarities, learning how everyday actions contribute to sustainability efforts.

Media literacy was also a crucial focus, teaching participants to recognize misinformation and use social media responsibly. They learned to discern credible information sources and avoid fake news while balancing online and offline activities.

A volunteer day was organized to refurbish a rest area along the story trail near Liptód, providing participants with hands-on community engagement experience. This practical activity highlighted the importance of volunteerism, teamwork, and environmental consciousness.

Supporting documents can be found: <https://gyiot.hu/projektek/awwwareness/>

https://gyiot.hu/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/GYIOT_fejlodesinaplo.pdf Contact information for

further inquiries: gyiot@gyiot.hu

Mental health through Nature and Community

GYIÖT, SDRUZHENIE WALK TOGETHER, BRNO FOR YOU ZS, UDRUGA ZA RAZVOJ ZAJEDNICE "KREAKTIVA", Stowarzyszenie LEVEL UP

Liptód, Hungary

Main goals

The project aims to raise awareness about the importance of mental health and demonstrate how it is interconnected with environmental factors and social interactions. By fostering a holistic approach to well-being, it emphasizes the role of nature and community as foundational elements that contribute to overall mental health.

The initiative seeks to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues by encouraging open discussions and shared experiences among participants from diverse cultural backgrounds. Through non-formal education methods such as outdoor activities, workshops, and mindfulness practices, the project provides participants with practical tools and techniques to manage stress and anxiety in their daily lives. Moreover, it aims to cultivate a supportive and inclusive community where young people feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and emotions, while also learning to actively listen and support each other.

Target groups

The target group for the Mental health through Nature and Community initiative primarily includes youth aged 14-18 from various European countries.

Description of Intervention

Foundation and Structure of the Program

The intervention began with foundational activities such as ice-breakers and team-building exercises to establish trust and a sense of community among participants. This was essential to create a safe environment where participants could share their thoughts and feelings openly. Group leaders played a crucial role in supporting their teams, as they knew the participants best and could communicate with them in their native languages. A psychologist was also available throughout the exchange, offering personal consultations and responding to anonymous

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☒ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☒ international
- ☐ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

questions submitted via an online form.

After these initial bonding activities, the participants collaboratively established rules and guidelines to foster mutual support, open-mindedness, and a safe space for sharing challenges. Morning outdoor activities like mindfulness practices, yoga, and hiking set a positive tone for the day and reinforced the program's emphasis on nature.

Exploring Mental Health through Non-Formal Learning

The main phase of the program delved into mental health topics through discussions and interactive sessions. Participants were encouraged to reflect on their own strengths, emotions, and mental health experiences. By comparing attitudes and perceptions across different countries, they could appreciate the cultural nuances of mental health and recognize shared challenges. Key themes included stress, anxiety, and cognitive distortions, with facilitators guiding them to identify and address their personal struggles.

A range of non-formal learning strategies was employed, including:

Group discussions and reflection: Facilitators initiated conversations on mental health attitudes, challenges, and coping mechanisms. Participants explored topics like stigma, emotional awareness, and seeking help in small groups. After these discussions, reflection sessions allowed them to process their learning and share insights.

Mindfulness and relaxation techniques: Daily outdoor sessions incorporated mindfulness practices such as breathing exercises, yoga, and progressive relaxation. These activities not only introduced participants to effective stress management techniques but also highlighted the calming influence of nature.

Creative workshops and role-playing: To foster empathy and understanding, participants engaged in creative exercises like drawing their emotions or role-playing challenging scenarios. These workshops encouraged them to think creatively about mental health and how they could support each other.

Skill development sessions: Practical skills like active listening, effective communication, and conflict resolution were emphasized through interactive activities. For instance, listening exercises helped participants understand the importance of empathy and validation.

Peer support and group dynamics: Group leaders and facilitators guided discussions on how participants could support each other. Activities like "circle of trust" and "peer mentoring" helped them identify ways to be supportive while respecting boundaries.

Intercultural exchange and learning: The program included an intercultural night where participants shared their cultures through dance, food, and stories. This fostered inclusivity and highlighted the diversity of mental health practices and beliefs.

Well-being planning and implementation: Towards the end of the program, participants prepared and led their own "well-being" sessions for the group, drawing from their personal interests and cultural backgrounds. These sessions included yoga, dance, music, and meditation, reinforcing the idea that self-care practices can be both unique and communal.

Daily schedule overview:

The daily schedule combined structured sessions with open spaces for participants to explore their interests and emerging mental health topics. Each day ended with an evaluation session where participants reflected on their learning and provided feedback to improve the program. This iterative process ensured that the program remained adaptive and relevant.

Strategies for effective learning and growth

The intervention's success relied on several core strategies that maximized learning outcomes:

Adaptive program design: The program remained flexible, allowing facilitators to adjust activities based on participants' needs and feedback. Daily evaluation sessions were crucial in this regard, enabling continuous improvement.

Holistic approach to mental health: By combining cognitive, emotional, and physical activities, the program provided a comprehensive exploration of mental health. Mindfulness practices, creative workshops, and group discussions ensured a well-rounded approach.

Non-Formal learning tools: The use of non-formal learning methodologies like peer mentoring, role-playing, and reflection circles helped participants engage deeply with the material and apply it to their lives.

Expert support and guidance: The presence of a psychologist added depth to the program, offering participants a safe space for personal consultations and facilitating deeper discussions on mental health topics.

Cultural sensitivity and inclusivity: Recognizing the diversity of participants, facilitators emphasized inclusivity in all activities, ensuring that everyone felt valued and heard. The intercultural exchange component further reinforced this value.

Key outcomes and reflections:

By the end of the program, participants highlighted significant learning outcomes, including improved active listening skills, empathy, and stress management techniques. They also gained a deeper understanding of mental health challenges and how to address them through peer support and self-care strategies.

The collaborative nature of the intervention fostered strong bonds among participants, with many expressing newfound confidence in sharing their thoughts and emotions. The youth exchange thus served as a transformative experience that empowered participants to become mental health advocates in their communities.

The Mental Health through Nature and Community youth exchange demonstrated the power of non-formal learning in addressing mental health challenges. By creating a safe, inclusive environment and using adaptive strategies, the program enabled participants to explore their mental health journeys deeply and develop practical skills for lifelong well-being. Supported by the Erasmus+ program, this exchange showcased the importance of holistic mental health interventions that integrate nature, community, and creativity.

The Mental Health through Nature and Community Youth Exchange took place from 29 October to 7 November 2023.

The youth exchange was supported by the Erasmus+ programme, which covered the costs incurred. In terms of human resources, it was necessary to involve a psychologist and two facilitators, and finally a person responsible for logistics.

Comparison Basis

The project's unique approach lay in its focus on supporting the mental development of young people through nature. Additionally, the involvement of a psychologist as an expert further distinguished this project from similar initiatives, adding depth and enhancing its overall impact.

Evaluation of Outcomes

Success was measured by the participants' improved understanding of mental health concepts and practices. This included recognizing signs of stress, anxiety, and cognitive distortions, as well as learning practical techniques like mindfulness, meditation, and progressive relaxation.

The project aimed to empower youth through non-formal learning methods such as team-building activities, outdoor exercises, and well-being workshops. Success was achieved if participants demonstrated the ability to apply these techniques to manage their emotions and stress.

The exchange sought to enhance participants' interpersonal and social skills, including active listening, empathy, conflict resolution, and collaborative problem-solving. A successful outcome involved participants showcasing improved communication and cooperation during group activities and daily evaluations.

A significant goal was fostering a sense of community and connection with nature. Success was determined by participants' ability to identify and articulate how outdoor activities and group support positively impacted their mental health.

The project aimed to facilitate cross-cultural understanding through activities like the Intercultural Night and collaborative exercises. Success was measured by participants' appreciation for diverse perspectives, traditions, and languages.

Participants were encouraged to recognize their strengths and lead well-being activities for their peers. Success was evaluated by their confidence in leading sessions, sharing ideas, and supporting each other.

The success of the program was also gauged through daily evaluations, which allowed facilitators to adapt activities based on emerging needs. A positive outcome was reflected in participants' active involvement in feedback sessions and the refinement of activities.

The youth exchange, supported by the Erasmus+ program, ultimately aimed to cultivate a generation of young people who are not only aware of mental health issues but also equipped with the skills to support themselves and their communities effectively.

Although no formal impact assessment was conducted during the project, young people had the opportunity to provide feedback. The key themes that emerged included:

- active listening,

- showing empathy
- supporting others,
- managing conflicts,
- methods to improve mental health,
- navigating emotions and coping with stress.

Feedback from both organizers and participants indicates that the project has clearly benefited the mental development of the young people involved.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

On the one hand, the role of the group leaders, who know the young people intimately - they can create a relaxed atmosphere (hence the importance of prior contact between the target group and the group leader). Another important specificity of the programme, which is worth adapting, is that it uses non-formal education methods. It also uses well-being-related tools, such as meditation and relaxation.

To ensure a nature-based experience that positively impacts mental development throughout the program elements, a psychologist's involvement is also essential.

The highlight of the programme was the professional assistance provided by the psychologist. In addition, it is important to involve professionals who can help young people to feel safe and able to talk about the challenges and obstacles they face in their lives. Creating an informal atmosphere is essential to making the mental health project a reality.

Additional Information and Conclusions

The primary objective of the Youth Exchange 'Mental Health through Nature and Community' was to develop young people's resilience through fostering community spirit, developing teamwork skills and promoting critical awareness. The programme supported young people through activities and workshops on mental health, nature and community, highlighting the importance of well-being, sustainability and emotional health.

Non-formal learning methods, outdoor activities and mindfulness exercises formed the core of the programme. Participants learned to recognise and effectively manage their feelings, cope with

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☐ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and regeneration
- ☒ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behavior
- ☐ Addictive behavior
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☒ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☒ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

stress and recognise their strengths. Mental health focused on identifying anxiety and cognitive biases, as well as methods of active listening, empathy and conflict management. Stress management techniques included breathing exercises and progressive relaxation.

In order to build community spirit and develop intercultural sensitivity, intercultural evenings and team-building activities strengthened young people's cooperative skills, empathy and openness towards other nations. Outdoor activities such as hiking and nature exploration emphasised the importance of environmental protection, helping to raise awareness of sustainability among participants.

At the end of the programme, the young people created their own 'well-being' programmes for each other, collecting activities that can relieve stress and promote mental well-being in everyday life. These exercises were also shared with their peers, giving the group the opportunity to share ideas and experiences.

At the end of the exchange, participants highlighted the skills of active listening, empathy, conflict management, stress management and improving mental health in their evaluation of the learning. The initiative, supported by the Erasmus+ programme, has made a significant contribution to developing young people's resilience and strengthening their positive community outlook.

Supporting documents can be found:

<https://gyiot.hu/hirek/mentomellenynek-lenni-pszichologuskent-egy-ifjusagi-cseren/>

<https://gyiot.hu/hirek/mental-health-through-nature-and-community-ifjusagi-csere/> Contact

information for further inquiries: gyiot@gyiot.hu

Deviszont Community Space

Egyenlő Esélyekkel az Iskolapadban Association

Budapest, Hungary

Main goals

The Deviszont Community Space is a critical pedagogical programme for young people in vocational education. The mission of the programme is to engage young people in social issues, and to help them become critically thinking, active citizens, who are not only aware of (social) issues, but have knowledge of good practices, organisations working for change. Moreover, the programme aims to equip the participating young people with knowledge and capacity to become community organisers or builders themselves.

In the community space the team organises weekly sessions and workshops using the approach of critical pedagogy and community-building.

Target groups

The target group of the community space is young people aged 14-20 who are studying in vocational education. Due to the specificities of the Hungarian education system, those who are attending vocational education are more likely to have a disadvantaged socio-economic background. The programme targets them.

Description of Intervention

The main activity of the community space is the weekly sessions on Thursdays. These activities can be either part of a three-part project or a single one.

Both type of sessions is co-created with the participating youth: there are regular co-creation sessions where the young people have the opportunity to tell what questions and topics they are interested in. The organising team then use the answers to create the three-part projects, each of which is focusing on one (wider or narrower) topic. The narrative arc of these project is the following: the first session introduces the topic in a more general manner; the next session examines the personal aspects of the topic; then the last session focuses on the systemic aspects and implications. Some examples of the projects that has been carried out in the last few years: school and education system; work and being an employee; being a young adult; cultures; death

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☐ national
- ☐ regional
- ☒ county-level
- ☐ municipal

and mourning; tolerance and inclusivity; politics and civil activity; mobility and transport; life in the city; food industry; mental health etc.

In-between these three-part projects, one-time sessions are being held. These sessions focus on community-building and strengthening (board games, movie afternoons, outdoor programs, getting-to-know each other sessions etc.), and/or celebrating special occasions (the “birthday” of the communityspace, Christmas, the last session before the summer holiday at the end of July). The activities/thematic focus of these events are also discussed with the participants beforehand.

All sessions have recurring parts: making food and eating together; opening round where everyone can share how they are feeling themselves and what has happened to them in the last week; closing round where they can tell the group how they liked the day. these activities help creating a safe environment, where things are predictable, and where one can share their experiences and be sure that the others will listen to them.

The rules and basic principles of the community space are created together with the participating youth, in order to make it a safe space for them, where they can freely express themselves and be a part of the community. The team has protocols in place for crises and emergencies as well; the participating young people are familiar with these protocols, and know how they can ask for help from the team, should they need it.

In 2024 a new program element has been launched, which focuses on the road “from participants to volunteers”. The programme wants to enable young people who had been active participants to become involved in the life of the community space as organisers. There has been a training course organised for them in November, during which, in addition to acquiring theoretical and practical knowledge, the participating young people also learned about the operation and background work of community space. They then became involved in different areas of the work: as facilitators and as organisers of community events.

Since 2021, the community space organises three-day summer camps during June-July. The aim of these outings is to for the community to be together and share experiences. Most of the participating young people have no means of going on a holiday; thus, these opportunities can be really valuable for them (especially if they have family problems at home).

The pedagogical methodology of the programme of the community space is threefold: community, critical thinking and civic/political action.

Community as a pedagogical block is aimed at:

- experiencing the value and positive aspects of belonging to a community and community action;
- experiencing and learning to pay attention to each other's moods, state of mind and individual functioning;
- developing new relationships, getting to know each other, developing social skills;
- experiencing acceptance and a safe environment, managing and accepting differences;
- experiencing in social learning: everyone's knowledge is valuable;
- experiencing solidarity;
- experiencing democratic functioning and community responsibility.

The skills it wants to develop:

- self-awareness;
- empathy;
- social skills: building and maintaining relationships, communication;
- community functioning, thinking in community, adapting to community;
- communication, communication skills;
- critical interpretation of rules;
- conflict management;
- learning the culture of debate.

Critical thinking as a pedagogical block is aimed at:

- knowledge and understanding of the structure and functioning of social systems and subsystems (economy, education, culture, politics, science, health) and understanding of their interrelationships;
- knowledge and recognition of social inequalities at a systemic level and in the immediate context;
- knowledge of global inequalities and intercultural differences;
- cultural awareness, acquiring a broader understanding of culture (attachment to social class, race, gender, subcultures)
- awareness of social prejudices, rejection of exclusionary (racist, sexist, elitist) thinking;
- historical and current examples of action against inequalities (knowledge of organisations and movements).

The skills it wants to develop:

- the ability to interpret social phenomena and problems at different levels; ability to think systemically while understanding individual situation and involvement, making sense of context;
- comparative, analytical thinking, ability to ask questions;
- ability to formulate problems and own opinions, to argue against them;
- ability to question social hierarchy and authority;
- managing cultural differences, communicating with people from other cultures;
- the ability to recognise the experience and knowledge of people from other backgrounds.

Civic/political action as a pedagogical block is aimed at:

- breaking down the concept of politics – “what is personal is political”;
- basic civic knowledge, citizens' rights;
- knowledge of different levels of politics: from municipal to national politics, and how they work;
- knowledge of the concept of the state, how the state works. The skills it wants to develop:
- forming opinions on public issues;
- recognising your own and others' political values;
- interpreting public events;
- conscious use of sources / navigating the internet, filtering out fake news.

The activities of the community space are all connected to one or more of these blocks; the aim is for the participating young people to gain knowledge and skills in all three of these categories.

In order to introduce the community space for as many students as possible, the team regularly organises school classes in vocational schools for free. These classes are based on students' opinions and experiences, using interactive methods, with a strong emphasis on critical thinking and teamwork.

The program is ongoing since 2018; it is open two days a week, for 5 hours per day. The team operating the community space and the programme consists of 6 (part-time) employees, and 6 – 8 volunteers on yearly average. The organisation is financed via three main sources of income: project applications (national and international projects), regular and occasional donations, and fund-raising campaigns.

Comparison Basis

There are other community spaces for young people in Budapest, and in other towns in Hungary. However, these spaces utilise different pedagogical/youth work methods, and in some cases target a broader target group. The Deviszont Community Space is unique in the sense that there are few programmes for this group (vocational school students), especially those that are educational and free of charge, and that this is the first program in Hungary to use a methodology based on critical pedagogy for this age group.

Evaluation of Outcomes

The criteria are based on the three-part methodology: "success" can be defined as the acquisition (or development) of the skills outlined in the methodology; and if the well-being (mental, emotional, social and physical) of the members of the community – focusing on their time spent in the community space, since the programme can affect that; however, the assumption is that if the participants can spend their time in the community space feeling well, that can have an impact for the other aspects of their lives too.

There was no systemic impact assessment carried out yet; in the everyday operation the team regularly ask for feedback from the participants regarding the three-part projects and the individual sessions (in semi-structured group discussions).

In 2023 many larger EU-funded projects have started in the community space – some of those contain some sort of assessment: usually based on qualitative data gathering (interviews and/or group interviews).

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☐ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and regeneration
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behavior
- ☐ Addictive behavior
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☐ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☐ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

(Up)Scalability and allocation

This particular mode of operating a community space can be adapted by others, due to the fact that the organisation has created comprehensive documents about the methodology; and have carried out (and will carry out) trainings regarding the theory and practice of the programme.

On the other hand, this programme is considered to be labour-intensive, since at one session there are at least three facilitators working with the participating youth (on a rota; this means at least 10 facilitators).

This programme requires a certain degree of commitment from the participating young people in order to reach its goals; this means a natural limit for the number of potential clients. The two most important pre-requisite of this programme is a (constant, reliable) place for the community space; and skilled workforce. The sessions require manual and digital tools and supplies.

The location of the community space is crucial in attracting the potential participants – it is advised to be close to either their place of living or their schools.

Additional Information and Conclusions

The programme primarily supports resilience development by strengthening community spirit, building community and transferring community skills. In addition, critical awareness of the world and the development of calm reasoning and debate skills, and learning about initiatives and good examples working for change all contribute to building resilience and coping skills of the participating young people.

Moreover, the community space offers a safe space for its participants, where they can unload their daily burdens and be themselves without reproach, and where they can live their culture and interests freely.

Supporting documents can be found: <https://deviszontkozter.hu/about-us/>

<https://www.facebook.com/deviszontkozter> (mostly in Hungarian) Contact information for further inquiries: hello@deviszontkozter.hu

Tanoda (After-school) Programme

Nationwide

Hungary

Main goals

The Tanoda is an innovative, government-funded initiative operated by a civil or religious organization. It aims to compensate for disadvantages and is based on local characteristics, voluntary participation of children and youth, and their individual needs. The Tanoda provides a community space that is used independently by the organization running it. It offers a comprehensive service focused on the overall personality development of children and youth who have been less successful in the public education system and are marginalized in society. The Tanoda not only carries out educational tasks but also considers its activities related to socialization, career development, cultural mediation, community building, leisure organization, mental well-being, and social support to be equally important.

Target groups

Tanoda's primary target group consists of children and young people who are at risk of school drop-out, facing challenges in entering the labour market, and experiencing social marginalization. The main criteria for identifying this group are low levels of education and the disadvantaged socioeconomic status of their parent(s). According to current legal regulations, disadvantaged students and those receiving Regular Child Protection Benefit can be classified in this group, with special consideration for Roma children and young people.

Description of Intervention

The Tanoda provides services and opportunities to target group members free of charge, which are otherwise available to their middle-class peers through purchase or other means due to their social status. These opportunities include educational services and participation in leisure activities, career building, and integrated social experiences. The tasks of the Tanoda can be categorized into five types, all of which are carried out during the implementation of the Tanoda program.

Supporting Conscious Career Building

Goal: The aim is to provide decision-making support for choosing educational paths and managing family life. This involves assisting in making informed choices about schools and careers, as well as

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☒ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☒ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☒ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

developing personal and social competence through education on social and emotional skills, mental health, healthy lifestyle, and family life. The program also offers support for career and academic orientation, information on support systems, grants, and opportunities for disadvantaged students, as well as talent development.

Tasks:

Social and Emotional Education: This includes teaching children and youth how to understand and manage their emotions, develop empathy, and build healthy relationships with others. These skills are crucial for personal and professional success and help individuals navigate the complexities of life.

Mental Health Development: This involves promoting mental well-being through various activities and educational programs. The focus is on preventing mental health issues and providing support for those who may be struggling. Key aspects include:

Education for a Healthy Lifestyle: Encouraging habits that contribute to physical and mental well-being, such as regular exercise, balanced nutrition, and adequate sleep.

Education for Family Life: Preparing children and youth for the responsibilities and challenges of family life, including effective communication, conflict resolution, and understanding family dynamics.

Support for School Career and Career Orientation: This task aims to guide students in making informed decisions about their educational and career paths. It includes:

School Preparation (for Preschool-aged Children): Ensuring that young children are ready for school by developing their basic skills and fostering a positive attitude towards learning.

Assistance with School Selection: Helping students and their families choose the right school based on the child's needs, interests, and future goals.

Career Orientation: Providing information and guidance on various career options, the labour market, different professions, and the necessary qualifications and skills. This helps students understand their strengths and interests, explore potential careers, and make informed decisions.

Information on Support Systems, Grants, and Opportunities for Disadvantaged Students: Providing access to information about various support systems, scholarships, and opportunities available to disadvantaged students to ensure they have the resources they need to succeed.

Talent Nurturing: Identifying and nurturing the talents and strengths of each student, providing them with opportunities to develop their abilities and achieve their full potential.

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and regeneration
- ☒ Exercise/physical activity
- ☒ Nutritional behaviour
- ☒ Addictive behaviour
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☒ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☒ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

Learning Support Based on Individual Needs and Requirements

Goal: To support academic achievement by reinforcing fundamental skills essential for independent learning, cultivating key competencies, and offering subject-specific tutoring. This includes creating a conducive learning environment with appropriate infrastructure, developing basic skills such as reading comprehension and fundamental math skills, utilizing effective learning methods, promoting the use of information and communication tools, providing learning possibilities of foreign languages, and offering subject-specific preparatory assistance.

Tasks:

Providing an Appropriate Learning Environment and Infrastructure: Ensuring that students have access to a safe, comfortable, and well-equipped learning environment that supports their educational needs.

Supporting the Development of Basic Skills: Helping students develop essential skills that are the foundation for academic success, including:

Development of Reading Comprehension: Teaching students how to understand and analyse written texts, which is crucial for all areas of learning.

Basic Mathematical Operations: Ensuring that students have a solid understanding of basic math concepts and can perform fundamental operations.

Learning Methodology: Teaching students effective study techniques and strategies to enhance their learning and retention of information.

Supporting the Use of Information and Communication Tools: Encouraging students to use technology effectively and responsibly to enhance their learning and access information.

Teaching Foreign Languages: Providing opportunities for students to learn foreign languages, which can improve cognitive skills and open up new cultural and career opportunities.

Subject-Specific Preparation: Offering tutoring and support in specific subjects to help students overcome challenges and achieve academic success.

Community Development

Goal: To foster a sense of trust and belonging within the community by providing community spaces and programs and collaborating with families. This helps to create a supportive environment where children and youth feel valued and connected.

Tasks:

Providing Community Space and Programs: Offering a safe and welcoming space where students can come together, participate in various activities, and build relationships with their peers and mentors.

Collaboration with Families: Engaging with the families of students to create a supportive network and ensure that they are involved in their children's education and development. This includes regular communication, family events, and workshops.

Providing Leisure Activities

Goal: To motivate children and youth, and to provide experiences and opportunities that their middle- class peers can mostly access, promoting cultural, artistic, and sports activities, as well as excursions. These activities help students develop new skills, build confidence, and form positive relationships.

Tasks:

Cultural Activities and Cultural Consumption: Exposing students to various cultural experiences, such as attending performances, visiting museums, and participating in cultural festivals.

Artistic Creative Activities: Encouraging students to express themselves through various forms of art, including painting, music, dance, and drama.

Sports Activities: Promoting physical fitness and teamwork through participation in sports and physical activities.

Excursions: Organizing trips and outings that provide educational and recreational experiences, helping students to broaden their horizons and learn about the world around them.

Promoting Social Integration

Goal: The objective is to promote social integration through integrated community programs, intercultural perspective, identity awareness, and citizenship knowledge. This includes fostering cooperation skills and promoting social solidarity and acceptance of diversity, as well as educating about active citizenship and democracy.

Tasks:

Implementing Integrated Community Programs Inside and Outside the Tanoda: Creating opportunities for students to interact with diverse groups and participate in community activities that promote social cohesion.

Strengthening an Intercultural Perspective: Educating students about different cultures and encouraging respect and appreciation for diversity.

Strengthening Identity Awareness: Helping students to understand and appreciate their own identity and cultural heritage.

Developing Citizenship Knowledge: Educating students about their rights and responsibilities as citizens and encouraging active participation in democratic processes. This includes:

Education for Democracy: Teaching students about democratic values and principles, and encouraging them to engage in civic activities.

Development of Debate Culture: Promoting critical thinking and effective communication through debates and discussions on various topics.

In summary, the Tanoda provides a comprehensive range of services and opportunities that support the educational, personal, and social development of disadvantaged children and youth. By focusing on conscious career building, individualized learning support, community development, leisure activities, and social integration, the Tanoda aims to bridge the gap between disadvantaged students and their more privileged peers, helping them to achieve their full potential and become

active, engaged members of society.

Resources utilized:

The government provides support for the participation of 30 children in the Tanoda program with funding of 13-14 million forints yearly. It also outlines the requirements that the facility must meet. For instance, it must be a separate building, not part of a school, with a large community room, a study area, space for outdoor activities, a kitchenette, and restrooms. Additionally, the law mandates the employment of at least three staff members working a total of 80 hours per week, with primary qualifications in higher education in pedagogy and/or social work.

Comparison Basis

Staffing for Útravaló includes mentors, typically teachers or qualified professionals, similar to Tanoda's requirement for staff with backgrounds in pedagogy or social work. Útravaló offers tutoring, mentoring, career guidance, and financial assistance within the regular school framework, whereas Tanoda provides structured programs in separate facilities, involving academic support, career guidance, and personal development, and actively engaging families and the community.

Both programs aim to reduce dropout rates and increase educational attainment for disadvantaged students by providing essential resources and support. They share key similarities, such as targeting disadvantaged or at-risk youth, offering comprehensive support in academics, career guidance, and personal development, and emphasizing mentorship from qualified professionals. However, key differences include infrastructure requirements—Tanoda requires standalone buildings while Útravaló uses existing school facilities. Additionally, Útravaló offers financial assistance, whereas Tanoda provides a dedicated learning environment. Tanoda operates independently, while Útravaló is integrated into the school system. Tanoda teachers adopt a mentoring attitude, providing guidance without dictation, and work outside the schools where the children are failing to avoid bias.

Evaluation of Outcomes

Criteria for success in the program include regular participation, positive behavioural changes such as regular school attendance, improved grades, successful completion of high school, attainment of a high school graduation or vocational certificate, and participation in higher education. The program employs a mixed-methods approach for assessment, utilizing an annual evaluation grid provided by the state and annual measurements of students' comprehension, mathematics, and language skills through various tests.

There is no official report available on the program's achievements, and comparing different programs is challenging due to their unique adaptations to local communities. One significant challenge encountered is under-financing, necessitating the involvement of various funding sources alongside public finance and the participation of volunteers to sustain the program.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

This practice has strong potential for adaptation and scalability on an international level, especially if there is increased funding available for non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Successful implementation would require a combination of public funding and grants to ensure financial stability. Additionally, the program would need a dedicated team of paid staff with professional qualifications in pedagogy, social work, or psychology to provide the necessary expertise and support. The involvement of volunteers would also be crucial to supplement the efforts of the paid staff and enhance community engagement. By leveraging these resources, the program can be effectively tailored to meet the needs of diverse communities across different regions.

Additional Information and Conclusions

The Tanoda initiative significantly enhances resilience development among disadvantaged youth in Hungary by providing a comprehensive support system that addresses academic, social, and emotional aspects of a child's life. Tanoda offers extensive educational support, including tutoring, homework assistance, and skill-building activities. These programs help students improve academic performance, build confidence, and develop a growth mindset. Personalized attention and tailored learning plans cater

to each student's unique needs, which is crucial for those who struggle in traditional educational settings.

Tanoda emphasizes social and emotional learning (SEL), equipping children with essential life skills such as emotional regulation, empathy, and effective communication. Activities promoting teamwork,

problem-solving, and conflict resolution help students navigate social challenges and build positive relationships. The supportive community environment helps children feel valued and understood, fostering self-esteem and emotional well-being.

Additionally, Tanoda creates a sense of community and belonging, which is vital for resilience. By offering a safe space for children to connect with peers and mentors, Tanoda fosters a supportive network that children can rely on during times of stress or adversity. This sense of belonging helps mitigate feelings of isolation and marginalization often experienced by disadvantaged youth.

Supporting documents related to the Tanoda initiative can be accessed [here](#). For further inquiries, please contact Társadalmi Esélyteremtési Főigazgatóság at Budapest, Szegedi út 35-37, 1135.

Downtown Tanoda Foundation High School

Belvárosi Tanoda

Hungary

Main goals

The main goal of Belvárosi Tanoda Alapítványi Gimnázium (Downtown Tanoda Foundation High School) is to provide support and education tailored to student's individual needs, particularly those who face learning difficulties and behavioural problems, or come from disadvantaged backgrounds. As a second-chance high school, it specifically caters to students who have dropped out of public high schools and those who couldn't fit into the traditional education system. The school aims to facilitate the integration of these students into the educational system and improve the overall quality of education by applying supportive pedagogical methods.

Target groups

This second-chance high school caters to a diverse group of students, including those from various family and social backgrounds, with different life experiences and educational histories.

The target group includes:

- Adolescents and young adults who have experienced significant academic failures and consequent low self-esteem.
- Students are characterised as "dropouts" or "deviants" who still desire to change and improve their lives despite past failures.
- Students from state care or child protection systems who often try to balance between work and school.
- Anxious young people who have faced social and learning difficulties due to previous traumas or failures.
- Individuals dealing with psychological issues such as bipolar disorder, borderline personality disorder, or eating disorders.
- Students struggling with addictions that have impacted their academic and social lives.
- Those with markedly different worldviews or lifestyles face difficulties in conventional school settings.

Students experiencing severe life situations, such as serious illness, sudden responsibilities as family breadwinners, homelessness, or being in state care, require complex support.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☒ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☐ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☒ municipal

Description of Intervention

Belvárosi Tanoda operates on the principle of providing a second chance to those students who have been marginalized or have failed in the conventional school system. This includes a diverse range of students, from those with learning difficulties and behavioural issues to those with complex personal and social backgrounds. The school was established to create an inclusive and supportive environment where these students can thrive.

Personalized Learning Programs

One of the core strategies of Belvárosi Tanoda is the development of personalized learning programs for each student. Upon enrolment, students work with their mentors to create a tailored learning plan that addresses their individual needs, interests, and academic goals. These plans are flexible and can be adjusted as needed to ensure that students remain motivated and engaged.

Individual Development Plans: Each student's plan includes both short-term and long-term goals, specifying the subjects they will study and the timeline for completing their education. Regular reviews and adjustments to these plans ensure they remain relevant and effective.

Flexible and Innovative Teaching Methods

Belvárosi Tanoda employs various innovative teaching methods to accommodate the diverse needs of its students. Traditional classroom settings are often replaced with more flexible, student-centred approaches that encourage active participation and self-directed learning.

Project-Based Learning: The school heavily utilizes project-based learning, where students engage in practical, real-world projects that enhance their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This method helps students see the relevance of their education and stay motivated.

Cooperative Learning: Emphasizing the importance of social skills and teamwork, cooperative learning strategies are implemented to encourage collaboration among students. This not only aids academic learning but also helps in building a supportive peer community.

Mentorship and Support Systems

Mentorship is a cornerstone of the educational approach at Belvárosi Tanoda. Each student is paired with a mentor who provides ongoing support, guidance, and feedback. This mentor-student relationship is crucial for building trust and ensuring that students feel valued and understood.

Regular Mentor Meetings: Mentors meet with their students regularly to discuss academic progress, personal challenges, and future plans. These meetings are integral to maintaining student engagement and addressing any issues that arise promptly.

Holistic Support: Beyond academic mentoring, the school provides mental health support, including counselling services and workshops on topics such as stress management and emotional resilience. This holistic approach helps address the broader needs of students, ensuring they are well-supported in all aspects of their lives.

Community and Peer Engagement

Creating a strong sense of community is vital at Belvárosi Tanoda. The school fosters a supportive and inclusive environment where students can form meaningful connections with their peers and

teachers.

Community Activities: The school organizes various community-building activities, including group projects, cultural events, and social outings. These activities help students develop a sense of belonging and mutual respect.

Peer Support Programs: Older students or those who have made significant progress act as peer mentors, offering guidance and support to newer or struggling students. This peer support system is beneficial in creating a collaborative and empathetic school culture.

Adaptation and Continuous Improvement

Belvárosi Tanoda is committed to continuous improvement and adaptation to meet the evolving needs of its students. The school's flexible structure allows for the incorporation of new educational practices and the adjustment of existing ones based on feedback and observed outcomes.

Feedback Mechanisms: The school regularly collects feedback from students, parents, and staff to identify areas for improvement. This feedback is used to make informed decisions about curriculum changes, teaching methods, and support services.

Professional Development: Teachers and staff at Belvárosi Tanoda engage in ongoing professional development to stay updated on the latest educational research and practices. This commitment to learning ensures that the school can provide high-quality education and support.

Successes and Outcomes

The personalised and supportive approach of Belvárosi Tanoda has led to significant positive outcomes for its students. Many students who were previously disengaged or struggling have been able to complete their education and achieve their academic goals.

Academic Achievement: Students often show marked improvements in their academic performance, with many successfully passing their exams and obtaining their high school diplomas.

Personal Growth: Beyond academics, students develop critical life skills such as resilience, self-discipline, and interpersonal communication. These skills are essential for their overall well-being and future success.

Regarding the resources utilized, Belvárosi Tanoda operates on a limited budget and relies on multiple funding sources. State funding provides teacher salaries, similar to other educational institutions. Ministry support funds compensatory programs for disadvantaged students, which

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and regeneration
- ☒ Exercise/physical activity
- ☒ Nutritional behaviour
- ☒ Addictive behaviour
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☒ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☒ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

are renewed annually. The school actively pursues grants and tenders domestically and internationally, although these processes are time-consuming. Donations, including 1% of personal income tax contributions, contribute to the funds but are unpredictable. Additionally, the school benefits from municipal support, with nearly rent-free premises provided by the Belváros-Lipótváros Municipality, significantly reducing costs.

Belvárosi Tanoda's success depends on its dedicated human resources, including about 20 teachers who also act as mentors, providing both academic and personal guidance. Additional support staff handle administrative tasks and grant applications. Continuous professional development ensures that staff stay updated on educational best practices.

The school's material resources are designed to create a supportive learning environment. It occupies a creatively utilized 300-square-meter space, fostering a close-knit community. A variety of learning materials, including books and digital devices, support diverse educational needs. Technological resources facilitate interactive learning, and community spaces foster informal interactions, which are essential for building a sense of community.

Comparison Basis

A similar initiative in Hungary is the "Új Esély Közhasznú Egyesület" (New Chance Public Benefit Association), which focuses on providing educational support and second chances to disadvantaged youth. The association offers various programs to reintegrate young people into the education system, similar to the efforts of Belvárosi Tanoda. These programs emphasize personalized support, flexible learning opportunities, and community engagement to help students achieve their academic and personal goals.

The organization offers a variety of support programs and services designed to help underprivileged young people reintegrate into the education system. It runs multiple projects in different locations, with a focus on providing a wide array of support services, including vocational training, life skills development, and social integration. While both organizations aim to support underprivileged youth, Belvárosi Tanoda Alapítványi Gimnázium specifically concentrates on creating a supportive high school environment for students who have struggled within the traditional education system. Through best practices, it demonstrates to the traditional school system and the Hungarian government that it is possible to teach every kind of student in inclusive educational settings.

Evaluation of Outcomes

The success of the school is measured using several key criteria. Firstly, academic achievement is a primary indicator, with the number of students passing their final exams and obtaining high school diploma being closely tracked. Secondly, individual development is monitored through personalized learning plans, with success measured by how well students meet their individual goals and milestones, which are regularly reviewed and adjusted. Thirdly, the effectiveness of the mentorship program is evaluated based on student feedback and the quality of mentor-student relationships, reflecting in improved self-confidence and motivation among students.

Fourthly, behavioural and emotional growth is a key success metric, including improvements in attendance, participation in school activities, and the development of positive coping strategies. Fifthly, success is also measured by students' ability to integrate into the school community and develop meaningful peer relationships, indicated by participation in group projects, community activities, and peer support programs. Additionally, the school employs both formative and summative assessments, with formative assessments occurring regularly during classes and summative assessments including comprehensive evaluations at the end of each term. Continuous improvement is driven by feedback mechanisms, with regular collection and action on feedback from students, parents, and staff to refine programs and support systems.

For assessment, the school uses a combination of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods approaches. Quantitative methods include systematic tracking of students' grades, exam results, and graduation rates, along with monitoring attendance records and participation in school activities to measure engagement and commitment. Qualitative methods involve conducting in-depth interviews and surveys with students and mentors to gather personal insights into students' experiences, challenges, and growth. Detailed case studies of individual students provide a nuanced view of their progress. Mixed-methods assessments involve both formative (ongoing) and summative (end-of-term) evaluations, ensuring a balanced evaluation of student learning and program effectiveness through regular holistic progress reviews that combine quantitative data with qualitative insights.

The key findings indicate that the school significantly improves students' academic performance, emotional well-being, and social skills. Many students successfully pass their exams and obtain diplomas, showing increased self-confidence and motivation while developing critical life skills and positive peer relationships. Challenges faced include securing consistent funding and addressing diverse student needs. These were addressed through continuous fundraising efforts, personalized learning plans, and regular feedback from students and staff, ensuring adaptable and responsive educational and support strategies.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

Belvárosi Tanoda's approach can be adapted and scaled to other educational settings by leveraging personalized learning plans, mentorship programs, and community engagement strategies. Successful adaptation requires adequate training for staff, securing diverse funding sources, and fostering a supportive, flexible learning environment tailored to local needs.

Effective implementation requires qualified teachers and mentors, financial support for salaries and materials, and adequate infrastructure. Additional resources include training for staff in personalized education methods, technology for digital learning, counselling services, and continuous funding through grants and donations to sustain and expand the programs. Therefore, state funding should be the main source of budget for the program.

Adaptation requires understanding local student needs, securing sustainable funding, and training staff in personalized and flexible teaching methods. Emphasize strong mentorship and community engagement, provide robust mental health support, and ensure continuous feedback mechanisms to refine and improve educational practices tailored to diverse contexts.

Additional Information and Conclusions

Belvárosi Tanoda Alapítványi Gimnázium enhances student resilience through a personalized and supportive educational environment. The school provides tailored educational programs, mentorship, and comprehensive support services (e.g: Peer self-help group) to help students who have struggled in traditional educational settings. The approach involves creating individualized educational programs that cater to each student's unique needs and strengths. The school emphasizes social and emotional learning alongside academics, and promotes a sense of belonging and mutual respect through community-building activities and peer support programs. Project-based and cooperative learning strategies make education engaging and relevant, enhancing academic skills while promoting critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability. Supporting documents related to Belvárosi Tanoda can be accessed through the following links: [Report and Publications](#)
[Article](#)

For further inquiries, please visit [Contact Information](#).

Szikra Tábor (Spark camp)

Szikra Tehetséggondozó Egyesület

Hungary

Main goals

The main goal of Szikra Tábor is to provide an inclusive, supportive, and engaging summer camp experience specifically designed for autistic children. The camp aims to foster social connections, provide enjoyment, and support neurodiversity without focusing on therapeutic development.

Target groups

Szikra Tábor is a camp specifically designed for autistic children, providing a supportive and inclusive environment where they can thrive. It focuses on neurodiverse children, fostering a sense of belonging, community, and social connections. The camp indirectly supports families by offering respite and assurance. With a high ratio of autism-specific professionals and trained volunteers, it provides personalized support for various activities promoting social skills and personal growth. The camp emphasizes the importance of neurodiversity, aiming to increase awareness and acceptance within the broader community. Overall, it plays a crucial role in the development and well-being of autistic children, making it a vital initiative for this target group.

Description of Intervention

Szikra Tábor is a unique initiative that provides inclusive summer camp experiences across multiple locations in Hungary. Various organisations apply for funding from the Szikra Tehetséggondozó Egyesület, which secures financial support primarily from municipalities and corporations. Each applicant organisation tailors its camp activities to meet local needs, creating diverse and engaging programs for autistic children.

Szikra Tábor is implemented in various locations, with each camp designed to cater to the specific needs and resources of its area. This approach allows for a wide range of activities and strategies, ensuring that each camp can address the unique preferences and requirements of its participants.

Examples from their Facebook page illustrate the diversity of these programs in 2024:

Mezőtúr Camp's activities included a visit to Szigligeti Theatre in Szolnok, where children learned about theatre operations and participated in interactive sessions. Exploration of the RepTár -

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☒ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☒ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☒ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Szolnoki Aviation Museum, engaging children with hands-on experiences of aviation history and technology.

The camp enhances children's cultural knowledge and technical curiosity while providing a fun and educational outing. Further activities included excursion to Szarvas, visit to Mini Hungary Park, where children explored miniature models of famous Hungarian landmarks, nature walk in the Arboretum, allowing children to connect with nature and learn about various plant species. A boat trip was organized on the Körös River with storytelling by the captain, enhancing their understanding of local geography and history. The camp combines educational and recreational activities to broaden children's horizons and provide memorable experiences.

The *Siófok Camp* offered a variety of engaging activities designed to promote physical activity, cultural enrichment, and social interaction in a scenic and relaxing environment by Lake Balaton. Campers enjoyed beach activities such as swimming, water slides, and go-karting. Dance workshops led by Vincze Laura introduced children to Latin dance and basic steps, enhancing their cultural awareness and physical coordination. A karate demonstration and obstacle course by Kalóczy József promoted physical fitness and discipline. Additionally, an adventure day at #hashtEGG Adventure Park featured egg-themed educational games and activities, providing a fun and interactive learning experience. Overall, the camp fostered physical activity, cultural enrichment, and social interaction in a beautiful and serene setting.

Komló Camp featured an excursion to Katica Tanya, where children enjoyed a variety of indoor and outdoor play areas, including slides, go-karts, trampolines, and a petting zoo. This provided a comprehensive and stimulating environment that catered to the diverse interests of autistic children, ensuring a fulfilling and enjoyable experience.

Each participating organisation operates under the guidelines set by Szikra Tehetséggondozó Egyesület, ensuring consistency and quality across all camps.

The organisations must:

- Provide a safe, inclusive environment tailored to the needs of autistic children.
- Hire qualified staff and volunteers trained in autism-specific strategies.
- Plan and execute a week-long camp with morning and afternoon sessions, each lasting approximately four hours.
- Ensure that camps are day programs, without overnight stays, and do not include meal provisions.

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs

☒ Personal education, knowledge

☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)

☒ Stress management and regeneration

☒ Exercise/physical activity

☒ Nutritional behaviour

☐ Addictive behaviour

☐ Other

Social & community networks

☒ Social support structures / services

☒ Personal social networks

☒ Empowerment/participation

☒ Networking of professional actors

☐ Other

Key characteristics of the camps:

Cultural and educational visits at the camps include trips to theatres, museums, and parks, providing children with exposure to arts, history, and nature through interactive and engaging hands-on learning experiences. Physical activities and sports, such as swimming dance, karate, and adventure courses, promote physical health, coordination, and discipline, with adaptations to ensure accessibility and enjoyment for all participants.

Creative and recreational activities, including arts and crafts sessions, games, and group activities, encourage creativity, social interaction, and teamwork, catering to various sensory preferences and abilities to ensure meaningful participation for all children.

Camps are equipped with sensory-friendly spaces and tools to help children manage sensory overload, offering quiet areas, sensory breaks, and visual schedules to help children anticipate and prepare for daily activities. Small peer support groups and mentorship programs help children build social connections and develop a sense of belonging, with mentors providing guidance and companionship to enhance the camp experience.

Family engagement is encouraged through family days and workshops for parents, fostering community support and providing resources for families to support their children, covering topics such as communication strategies and behaviour management.

In 2020, the organization received several prestigious awards, including the Érd Education Award, the Winner of the Year's Community Initiative by the Volunteer Center Foundation, the EDISON 100 recognition, the Women for Hungary Award presented to Association President Henrietta Zádori, and the 21 Women for Healthcare Foundation Award and Trademark. In 2021, it was recognized for Conscious Preparation for Autistic People by NFSZK and became a beneficiary of the MVM Zenergia Charity Concert. In 2022, the organization was honored with the Volunteer Program of the Year award for its Szikra Camp 2022 initiative.

The Szikra Tábor program is a week-long day camp running from Monday to Friday, with each day divided into morning and afternoon sessions lasting about four hours each. The specific dates and schedules are based on the needs and availability of the host locations, with most camps occurring during the summer months. Funding for the program comes from grants and donations secured by the Szikra Tehetséggondozó Egyesület, covering essential costs such as staff salaries, activity materials, entry fees for excursions, and travel expenses. This financial support ensures the camp remains free of charge for participants and their families.

Comparison Basis

A similar initiative in Hungary is the "Csodavár" camps organized by the Csodavár Foundation. These camps also focus on providing inclusive and supportive environments for children with special needs, including those with autism. They offer a variety of activities such as arts and crafts, outdoor adventures, and sensory-friendly sessions. Like Szikra Tábor, Csodavár camps aim to enhance social skills, provide enjoyment, and support the overall well-being of participants through tailored programs that address their unique needs. Both initiatives prioritize creating a safe and engaging atmosphere for children with autism.

Szikra Tábor emphasizes educational and cultural visits, while Csodavár camps include more general sensory-friendly activities. Szikra Tábor operates with funding from multiple sources and tailored local programs, whereas Csodavár camps are typically funded and organized by the foundation itself. Szikra Tábor collaborates with various organizations to meet local needs, whereas Csodavár camps have a more centralized structure. The most fundamental difference is that Szikra camps are free for families, with meal provisions being the only responsibility due to the varying dietary needs, habits, and requirements associated with autism. In contrast, Csodavár camps are primarily associated with the Csodavár playhouse, and parents are required to pay 50-60k HUF.

Evaluation of Outcomes

On their Facebook page, they post photos of the camps and provide small reports about the program. Additionally, after the program ends, each organization files a report about the implemented project.

Key findings highlight that parents of children with autism in Hungary face significant challenges in providing summer activities for their children due to a lack of trained staff and societal exclusion. Consequently, these families often lack a supportive community and struggle to afford essential services such as therapy. Szikra summer camps offer these children and their families opportunities for recreation and a better quality of life, which can positively impact their mental well-being. The primary challenge encountered is securing resources, which are sourced from companies utilizing this as their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program. Additionally, parents in the Szikra association volunteer throughout the year to gather resources for the summer camps.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

Adaptability: Szikra camps can be adapted to different regions by partnering with local organizations and tailoring activities to meet the specific needs of each community. The flexible program structure allows for adjustments based on available resources and local interests.

Scalability: The program can be scaled to a national or even international level by:

- Securing additional funding from various sources.
- Training more staff and volunteers in autism-specific support.
- Developing a standardized yet flexible curriculum that can be easily implemented by different organizations.
- Ensuring robust evaluation and feedback mechanisms to maintain quality across all locations.

Necessary resources are listed below.

Financial Resources:

- Funding from the state is required in bigger scale
- Funding from grants, donations, and sponsorships.
- Budget allocation for staff salaries, activity materials, entry fees for excursions, travel expenses,

and program materials.

Human Resources:

- Trained professionals, including special education teachers, therapists, and counselors.
- Volunteers trained in autism-specific support strategies.
- Adequate staff-to-camper ratio to ensure personalized attention.

Material Resources:

- Arts and crafts supplies, sports equipment, and sensory-friendly tools.
- Visual schedules and social stories to assist with daily activities.
- Facilities equipped to provide a safe and engaging environment, including sensory-friendly spaces

Additional Information and Conclusions

Szikra Tábor plays a significant role in developing resilience among autistic children by providing a supportive and inclusive environment. The camp's diverse activities, from arts and crafts to outdoor adventures, are designed to enhance social skills, emotional intelligence, and physical well-being. By fostering peer support and offering tailored mentorship, the program helps children build confidence and form meaningful connections. The involvement of trained professionals ensures personalized attention and the use of sensory-friendly strategies. This comprehensive approach not only addresses the immediate needs of participants but also equips them with lifelong skills to navigate challenges and thrive in various settings. The camp's adaptability and focus on continuous improvement further enhance its impact, making it a vital resource for resilience development in autistic children.

Supporting documents and additional details about Szikra Tábor can be found on their [Facebook page](#). For further inquiries, please visit their [contact page](#).

Republic of Moldova

Drug prevention project for children and adolescents "Education Against Drugs"/Program

National Health Insurance Company programme to combat drug use among young people - Implementing Organization: NGO "International Centre for Prevention and Information on Addiction"

Republic of Moldova

Main goals

To increase information, education and awareness of the risks of drug use among children and adolescents aged 7 to 19.

Target groups

Children and adolescents aged 7 to 19 from 150 primary, secondary, high school and vocational schools in the Republic of Moldova.

Description of Intervention

The project outlined here was a comprehensive initiative aimed at combating drug use among children and adolescents aged 7 to 19 in the Republic of Moldova. The approach was multifaceted, targeting both the youth directly and the professionals who worked with them. Below is an expanded and detailed scope, goals, and impact. description of each component of the project, enriched to provide a full picture of its

1. Development, Editing, and Distribution of Anti-Drug Information and Education Materials for Children and Adolescents Aged 7 to 19

This core component of the project focused on creating and disseminating educational materials that addressed drug prevention. The initiative developed and distributed 15,000 drug prevention guides to 15,000 children and adolescents from 150 primary, secondary, and vocational schools across the Republic of Moldova. These guides were age-appropriate, engaging, and informative, ensuring that they were accessible and appealing to the young audience.

The content of these guides was meticulously crafted to cover various aspects of drug prevention, including the dangers of drug use, ways to resist peer pressure, and the benefits of a drug-free lifestyle. Interactive elements such as quizzes, stories, and activities were included to make the learning process more engaging. By providing children and adolescents with the knowledge and

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☒ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☐ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☒ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

tools they needed to make informed decisions, the project aimed to foster a generation that was well-equipped to resist the allure of drugs.

2. Development, Editing, and Distribution of Drug Prevention Materials for Professionals

In addition to targeting the youth, the project recognized the importance of equipping professionals who worked with children and adolescents with the necessary tools and knowledge to combat drug use. To this end, the project developed, published, and distributed 1,500 drug prevention guides tailored for school doctors, family doctors, psychiatric-narcologists, social workers, psychologists, pedagogues, and other related professionals.

These guides included comprehensive information on drug prevention strategies, early signs of drug use, and intervention techniques. The materials were designed to support these professionals in their efforts to educate, identify, and assist at-risk youth. By enhancing the skills and knowledge of those on the front lines of drug prevention, the project aimed to create a robust support network for young people.

3. Organisation and Implementation of Initial and Continuing Training Courses for Specialists

To ensure that professionals were well-prepared to use the drug prevention materials and implement effective prevention strategies, the project organized and conducted both initial and continuing training courses. These courses catered to school doctors, family doctors, psychiatric-narcologists, social workers, psychologists, pedagogues, and other related professionals.

The training sessions spanned three academic hours and covered a range of topics, including the latest research on drug prevention, practical techniques for engaging with children and adolescents, and methods for supporting families affected by drug use. The goal was to provide these specialists with ongoing education and support, ensuring they remained up-to-date with best practices in the field. This continuous professional development was crucial in maintaining a high standard of care and prevention efforts.

4. Organisation and Implementation of Drug Prevention Lessons for Children and Adolescents

The project also included direct educational interventions for children and adolescents through the organization of thematic drug prevention lessons. These lessons were conducted in four classes or groups of 25 adolescents each, across 150 educational institutions participating in the project. Each lesson lasted 45 minutes and was based on the guide developed and published within the project. The lessons covered various topics, including the physical and mental health risks associated with drug use, strategies for resisting peer pressure, and the importance of making healthy lifestyle choices. Inter-active teaching methods, such as group discussions, role-playing, and multimedia presentations, were used to engage students and reinforce the message. By directly educating the youth in a structured environment, the project aimed to instill lasting knowledge and resilience against drug use.

5. Providing Specialized Help to Adolescent Drug Users/Addicts and Their Families

Recognizing that prevention alone was not enough, the project also aimed to provide specialized help to adolescents aged 10-19 who were already using or addicted to drugs, as well as their families. This component involved psychological counseling, social assistance, and legal support. Psychological counseling focused on helping adolescents understand the underlying issues that may have led to their drug use and developing coping strategies to overcome addiction. Social assistance provided support in areas such as education, employment, and social integration, while legal support helped families navigate any legal challenges related to drug use. By addressing the

needs of both the adolescents and their families, the project aimed to facilitate recovery and prevent relapse.

6. Partnership with the Media and Other Agencies to Disseminate Information

The final component of the project involved leveraging partnerships with the media and other interested bodies to disseminate information about the risks of drug use. This included publishing articles in news- papers and magazines and broadcasting radio and TV programs designed to inform, raise awareness, and educate the public. These media campaigns targeted not only children and adolescents but also parents, educators, and the general community. By using a variety of platforms to spread the message, the project aimed to reach a broad audience and create a culture of awareness and prevention. The use of electronic means, such as social media and websites, was also explored to maximize the reach and impact of the campaigns. This comprehensive project aimed to address the issue of drug use among children and adolescents in the Republic of Moldova through a multifaceted approach. By developing and distributing educational materials, providing training for professionals, conducting direct educational interventions, offering specialized support to drug users and their families, and leveraging media partnerships, the project sought to create a robust and sustainable framework for drug prevention. Through these efforts, the project aimed to equip young people with the knowledge and resilience they needed to make healthy choices, support professionals in their prevention efforts, and ultimately reduce the prevalence of drug use among the youth in Moldova.

Duration: 01 October 2021- 31 December 2021 (3 months)

Project budget: 1 532 345,0 lei. (78600 euro)

Human resources involved in the implementation of the project and their responsibilities:

The project will involve a multidisciplinary team, consisting of 3 management staff, 9 highly qualified specialists employed in different fields and 20 volunteers.

Comparison Basis

"*Together Against Drugs*" Campaign by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova:

This initiative focuses on developing and distributing educational materials and organizing awareness campaigns to prevent drug use among children and adolescents. It includes creating informational brochures, posters, and organizing school-based activities to educate students about the risks of drug use.

Link: [Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection](#)

Limited Reach and Engagement:

Engagement Levels. Simply distributing materials does not guarantee engagement or retention of information. Students might not pay attention to or engage with the materials, especially if they are not interactive or engaging enough to capture their interest.

Quality and Relevance of Materials.

Outdated Information. The educational content must be regularly updated to reflect the latest research and trends in drug use. If the materials become outdated, they might not address current issues effectively.

Evaluation of Outcomes

Criteria for success (Evaluation):

Procedure for monitoring activities, evaluation and reporting of results:

- A permanent and spontaneous feedback from children and adolescents, school doctors, family doctors, psychiatrists-narcologists, social workers, psychologists and pedagogues, which will be carried out during the implementation of each stage and activity of the project;
- At the end of the project a survey will be carried out among doctors, social workers, psychologists and pedagogues to evaluate the effectiveness of the project.

The evaluation of the implementation of the project and the results obtained will be carried out in two stages:

- a. formative evaluation (monitoring)
- b. final evaluation.

The formative evaluation will be carried out monthly by the project manager and the assistant project manager and will follow the appropriateness of the methods used to the set objectives, the development of the project and its impact on the beneficiaries and professionals. An interim report will be drawn up on the basis of the evaluation sheets. The final evaluation will be carried out at the end of the project by the project manager and the assistant project manager. It follows the development of the project, the usefulness of the centre, the impact on beneficiaries and professionals.

Key findings and impacts on target group(s):

- Identification of 150 educational institutions in the Republic of Moldova that has participated in the project;
- Development, editing and distribution of anti-drug information and educational materials for 15,000 children and adolescents;
- Development, editing and distribution of drug prevention materials for children and adolescents aged 7 to 19 for 1500 school doctors, family doctors, psychiatrists, social workers, psychologists and pedagogues;
- Organisation of 450 hours of initial and continuous training for 1500 specialists working in the field of drug prevention among children and adolescents;
- Organisation of 600 thematic lessons for 15000 children and adolescents from 150 educational institutions participating in the project.

Challenges encountered and how they were addressed:

The pandemic has limited physical access to the pace of meetings with project beneficiaries. The use of digital tools allowed the objectives to be achieved.

The involvement of children, adolescents and professionals in the project was difficult due to the

pan- demic. To address this challenge, awareness raising, training and active involvement sessions were organised. Attractive and interactive materials were also created to maintain interest and engagement. Measuring the actual impact of the project was complex. Performance indicators, baseline studies and ongoing monitoring were used to measure success. Feedback from beneficiaries and professionals.

Addiction-related stigma. The project promoted accurate information and fought stereotypes, contributing to reducing stigma.

By implementing collaboration agreements and organising joint events, the project created synergies and maximised impact.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

How well can this practice be adapted and scaled to a different level?

These practices can be adapted and used internationally at the EU level. This level is envisaged by the National Strategy for EU Accession Moldova 2030, where the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for the fight against illicit drug trafficking.

This project ensures alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (hereafter - SDGs) and contributes to the achievement of national targets for sustainable development set under the National Sustainable Development monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, approved by Government Decision no. 953/2022), such as: SDG 3.5 Strengthen measures to prevent and treat alcohol abuse, illicit use of drugs and other psychotropic substances. The project ensures the implementation of several strategic objectives set out in public policy documents and in planning documents, such as the National Development Strategy, European Moldova 2030" (hereinafter - NDS „Moldova 2030"), which provides a long-term vision, focused on the needs of the citizens and linked to the development goals that are part of the United Nations 2030 Agenda (hereinafter - 2030 Agenda).

https://ansp.md/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Raport_Consumul-si-traficul-ilicit-de-droguri-2022.pdf

Harm reduction services related to use of injected drugs NGO "Positive Initiative"

Republic of Moldova

Main goals

Main goal of the project:

Reducing the risk of spreading HIV and STIs among injecting drug users.

Specific project objectives:

1) Increasing information, education and awareness of injecting drug users (IDUs) through counselling on the following components:

- initiation of drug treatment for IDUs;
- overdose prevention and prophylaxis;
- HIV pre-exposure and post-exposure prophylaxis;
- Centre Region -1305 beneficiaries
- A.O. Positive Initiative will cover - 755 beneficiaries
- A.O. AFI will cover - 250 beneficiaries
- A.O. For Present and Future will cover - 300 beneficiaries
- Southern Region -670 beneficiaries
- A.O. "Step by Step South Region" will cover - 670 beneficiaries

2) Development and distribution of 2040 informative and educational materials;

3) Medical referral/accompaniment of 590 beneficiaries.

Target groups

Up to 2000 injecting drug users located in central and southern regions of Moldova.

Description of Intervention

A.O. "Positive Initiative" successfully implemented a significant project in collaboration with regional partners, specifically A.O. "Step by Step South Region" in Cahul and partners from the Centre region,

A.O. "AFI" and A.O. "For Present and Future". This project was designed to address critical health and social issues affecting vulnerable populations, particularly those involved with drug use.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☒ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☒ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

The project began with a thorough screening process for newly employed individuals. This initial and comprehensive assessment was conducted by the trained staff of the involved organizations. The purpose of this screening was to identify the specific needs and challenges faced by each beneficiary, allowing for a tailored approach to support and intervention. Once the assessment was completed, beneficiaries received a comprehensive package of services designed to address their unique circumstances. These services were divided into several key components, each aimed at providing holistic support and improving overall well-being.

1. Advisory Services on Drug Treatment and Health Management:

Beneficiaries, particularly Injecting Drug Users (IDUs), received extensive counseling on the importance of drug treatment and the benefits it could offer. This included:

- **Initiating Drug Treatment:** Beneficiaries were informed about the different treatment options available, the process involved, and the long-term benefits of drug substitution treatment. Staff members provided ongoing support, which included referring and accompanying beneficiaries to treatment centers.
- **Psycho-Social Support:** Alongside medical treatment, beneficiaries received psycho-social support, which involved assessing their psychosocial needs, offering supportive counseling, and facilitating referrals to other necessary medical and community services. These services included access to specialists such as narcologists, angiosurgeons, infectious disease specialists, psychiatrists, dermatovenerologists, phthisiologists, and psychologists.
- **Overdose Prevention and Prophylaxis:** Education on overdose prevention and first aid was provided not only to IDUs but also to their families and close contacts. This ensured a wider network of support and immediate response capability in case of an overdose.

2. HIV Prevention and Prophylaxis:

Given the high risk of HIV transmission among IDUs, the project included several preventative measures:

- **HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP):** Counseling was provided to all individuals identified as being in a high-risk group. Staff conducted screenings to detect those in need of PrEP and facilitated their inclusion in pre-exposure prophylaxis programs.
- **HIV Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP):** In the event of accidental exposure to HIV, emergency measures were implemented promptly. This included risk assessment, immediate HIV testing, and follow-up testing at 6 and 12 weeks post-exposure. Beneficiaries were also referred and accompanied to antiretroviral treatment clinics within a maximum of 72 hours for evaluation and initiation of prophylactic treatment if necessary.

3. Distribution of Informative and Educational Materials:

A crucial aspect of the project was the development and dissemination of informative materials. These resources ensured that beneficiaries had access to high-quality information that was essential for making informed decisions about their health and well-being. The materials covered a wide range of topics, including:

- **HIV, STI, TB, HVC, and HVB Risk Factors:** Detailed information on the risk factors associated with these infections and diseases, helping beneficiaries understand how to reduce their risks.
- **Consequences of Psychoactive Substance Use:** Educating beneficiaries on the potential health and social consequences of using psychoactive substances.
- **Prevention of Violence and Alcohol Abuse:** Providing strategies for preventing violence, including rape, and addressing issues related to alcohol abuse.
- **Available Treatment Methods and Health Care Options:** Informing beneficiaries about the various treatment methods and healthcare services available to them through this initiative.

Through these comprehensive services and resources, the project aimed to create a supportive environment that promoted health, safety, and well-being among vulnerable populations. By addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by IDUs and their communities, the project not only improved individual health outcomes but also contributed to broader public health goals. The implementation of this project by A.O. "Positive Initiative" and its regional partners highlighted the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing complex social and health issues. By combining resources and expertise, these organizations provided more effective and comprehensive support to those in need. Moreover, the project exemplified a model of intervention that could be replicated in other regions and contexts. The structured approach to assessment, personalized service delivery, and emphasis on education and prevention created a robust framework for addressing the needs of vulnerable populations. This model ensured that beneficiaries received the necessary support to improve their health and social outcomes, ultimately leading to more resilient and healthier communities. In conclusion, the project implemented by A.O. "Positive Initiative" and its partners was a testament to the power of collaboration and comprehensive support in addressing the needs of vulnerable populations. By providing a wide range of services, from drug treatment and psycho-social support to education and prevention, the project significantly enhanced the well-being of its beneficiaries and set a precedent for future initiatives. The success of this project underscored the critical role that well-coordinated efforts and community-based interventions played in tackling public health challenges and improving the lives of individuals at risk.

Project duration:

01.10.2021 until 24.12.2021 (3 months)

Resources utilised (financial, human, material):

Project budget: The total budget of the project is 589999,98 lei. (30 587,22 euro)

- Management costs - 100 324,98 lei, which is 17% of the total budget;
- Expenditure for goods and services, total - 21 600,0 lei.

Human resources involved in the implementation of the project and their responsibilities: Total number: 19, of which:

- o management staff - 5;
- o employees -14.

Comparison Basis

Reference to similar initiatives for comparison

In the Republic of Moldova, there are several initiatives comparable to those mentioned for supporting IDUs (Injecting Drug Users) in terms of drug treatment, overdose prevention, and HIV prophylaxis. Here are some notable programs:

Harm Reduction Programs: The Republic of Moldova has implemented extensive harm reduction services, which include needle exchange programs, opioid substitution therapy (OST), and various support services aimed at reducing the spread of HIV among IDUs. These services are detailed in the country's progress reports and supported by international organizations such as UNAIDS and the Global Fund ([Homepage](#)) ([World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)).

Comprehensive HIV Prevention: The country has adopted WHO, UNODC, and UNAIDS guidelines to ensure universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, and care for drug users. This includes HIV testing and counseling, ART (antiretroviral therapy), and the integration of these services with general healthcare interventions ([World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)) ([UNODC](#)).

Overdose Prevention: Overdose prevention and first aid training are integral parts of Moldova's harm reduction strategy. These initiatives are supported by local NGOs and international bodies, ensuring that both IDUs and their communities are equipped with knowledge and resources to handle overdose situations effectively ([World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)).

These initiatives demonstrate a multifaceted approach to addressing the needs of IDUs, focusing on both prevention and treatment. They serve as useful models for other settings aiming to implement similar programs.

For more detailed information on these initiatives, you can visit:

[UNAIDS Moldova](#)

[UNODC HIV Prevention Guide](#)

The examined action could be considered more effective than existing similar initiatives for several reasons, particularly concerning youth mental health:

- Integrated and Comprehensive Support:
- Holistic Care
- Multidisciplinary Teams
- Focus on Education and Prevention
- HIV Prophylaxis
- Accessibility and Outreach
- Navigating Healthcare Systems
- Community Partnerships
- Stigma Reduction

Evaluation of Outcomes

Outcomes:

The package of services is fully formed based on the needs of the target group, according to the Standard for the organization and operation of HIV prevention services in the environment of key populations, including young people from these groups, approved by MSMPS Order No.278 of 18 March 2020 and in accordance with the National Anti-Drug Action Plan for 2020-2021, approved by Government Decision No.233/2020, namely:

- 1) 1975 beneficiaries received counseling on the following components:
 - Initiation to drug treatment for IDUs;
 - overdose prevention and prophylaxis;
 - HIV pre-exposure and post-exposure prophylaxis.
- 2) Around 30% of the beneficiaries (590 people) will be referred/counselled for medical care depending on the problems identified.
- 3) 2000 informational and educational materials will be developed and distributed.

Methodology used in the program for assessment (quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods)

Taking into account the uniqueness of the innovative service delivery model in the presence of the beneficiary's magnetic card, as well as the possession and availability of an electronic data collection system for the services provided, the organisation is in a leading position in the following aspects:

- 1) Absolute protection against falsification of the volume of services rendered by project staff, since the service can be fixed as rendered only if there is the client's magnetic card, which belongs to and is only with the beneficiary. Importantly, any beneficiary, if he/she wishes, can see the history of the services he/she has received, which means 100% trust and transparency in the relationship between the service provider and the beneficiary.
- 2) The electronic data collection system enables the entire volume of services provided to be viewed in order, broken down by:
 - Specificity of services;
 - Geographical location of services;
 - Person providing the service.

All this allows timely assessment of the dynamics of success, allowing prompt reaction to situations requiring attention.

- 3) The electronic system for collecting data on the service provided allows for the continuous generation of all data collected, and as a result the submission of any type of report, for any period, in accordance with the requirements of the Contracting Party.
- 4) Client's file (Personal application of the beneficiary, Agreement on the provision of integrated services, individual plan of the beneficiary, social survey on initial and complex assessment, other relevant documents).

Key findings and impacts on target group(s)

Impact on beneficiaries' personality:

1. Increased awareness and personal responsibility:
Access to quality information: When beneficiaries receive quality information about the effects of drug use and associated risks, they become more aware of the consequences of their actions. This awareness can lead to greater personal responsibility regarding their health and life decisions. A deep understanding of the dangers and negative impact of substance use can motivate beneficiaries to take preventive measures and make healthier choices.
2. Improvement in social relationships and reduction of stigma:
Informing their entourage: By educating not only the beneficiaries but also those in their entourage, stigma and discrimination associated with drug use and infectious diseases can be reduced. Better understanding of these issues by family and friends can lead to stronger emotional and social support for beneficiaries. This can contribute to improved social relationships and the creation of a safer and more understanding environment, which is essential for the recovery process.
3. Strengthening autonomy and self-confidence:
Information about treatment methods and medical assistance: Knowing about available treatment options and medical assistance can enhance the beneficiaries' sense of control and autonomy. When people know where to seek help and what resources are available, they are more likely to take the initiative in managing their health. This can lead to

increased self-confidence and a more positive perception of their ability to make positive changes in their lives.

Challenges encountered and how they were addressed:

Stigma: Beneficiaries may feel ashamed or judged, making them reluctant to seek information or support. Internalized stigma can hinder their willingness to engage with educational resources and healthcare services. Society's negative perceptions of drug users can lead to discrimination, reducing access to quality information and healthcare. This can also affect the willingness of beneficiaries to participate in programs due to fear of being labelled or ostracized.

Resource Limitations: Limited funding and resources can restrict the scope and reach of programs, making it difficult to provide consistent and comprehensive information and support.

Low Motivation: Beneficiaries struggling with addiction might have low motivation to seek help or engage with educational programs, particularly if they are in a state of denial about their substance use.

Short-Term Funding: Programs often rely on short-term grants, which can lead to interruptions in services and support, affecting continuity of care and trust among beneficiaries.

Literacy Levels: Beneficiaries may have varying levels of literacy and education, which requires information to be tailored and accessible to those with lower literacy levels.

Misinformation and Myths: Prevailing myths and misinformation about drug use, HIV, STIs, and other related issues can undermine educational efforts. Overcoming these requires persistent and clear communication strategies.

Addressing these challenges faced during the implementation of support actions for drug users involved strategic planning and tailored approaches.

1. **Educational Campaigns.** Conduct public awareness campaigns to reduce stigma and promote understanding about drug use and associated health issues. Highlight personal stories of recovery to humanize beneficiaries and reduce negative perceptions.

2. **Support Groups.** Create peer support groups where beneficiaries can share experiences without fear of judgment. These groups can foster a sense of community and mutual support.

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs

☒ Personal education, knowledge

☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)

☒ Stress management and regeneration

☐ Exercise/physical activity

☐ Nutritional behaviour

☒ Addictive behaviour

☐ Other

Social & community networks

☒ Social support structures / services

☒ Personal social networks

☒ Empowerment/participation

☐ Networking of professional actors

☐ Other

(Up)Scalability and allocation

This action has the potential:

- To increase the effectiveness of psychosocial support interventions and increase the number of people in stable remission.
- To create an appropriate psychological environment by increasing access to

psychosocial support programmes.

- To develop a model for the organisation of psychological and social services for drug users so that they meet the needs of their beneficiaries.
- Increase awareness among beneficiaries of organisations about drug treatment for drug users.
- To increase information among the beneficiaries of the organisation about overdose prevention and prophylaxis.
- To increase information among the beneficiaries of the organisations about HIV pre-exposure and post-exposure prophylaxis.
- Raise awareness, inform, educate injecting drug users and make them adopt harmless behaviour.
- Referring/accompanying beneficiaries to medical services when necessary.

What resources are required for implementation?

Total number: 19, of which:

- management staff - 5;
- employees - 14.

Namely: Narcologists, angiosurgeons, infectious diseases specialists, psychiatrists, dermatovenerologists, physiatrists, psychologists, social worker and trainers.

Recommendations for adaptation in other settings

Engage Local Leaders. Involve respected community leaders, healthcare providers, and influencers in the dissemination of information and training. Their endorsement can enhance trust and acceptance of the programs among beneficiaries.

Strengthen Partnerships. Establish strong partnerships with local healthcare providers, NGOs, and community organizations. Collaboration with local entities can facilitate referrals, follow-ups, and comprehensive care, ensuring that beneficiaries receive the necessary medical and psychosocial support.

Peer Support Networks. Establish peer support networks where individuals who have successfully navigated treatment and prevention programs can provide mentorship and support to new beneficiaries. Peer educators can play a crucial role in building trust and encouraging engagement.

Additional Information and Conclusions

The overall contribution of the proposed initiative to resilience development, particularly for young injection drug users, is determined by several aspects:

- Comprehensive Care
- Preventive Measures
- Skill Development.

Supporting documents (reports, publications, website links)

[Link http://old.cnam.md/index.php?page=244&](http://old.cnam.md/index.php?page=244&) [Link](#) (Inițiativa pozitivă)
<https://positivepeople.md/rapoarte/> <https://positivepeople.md/contacte/>

Contact information for further inquiries:

Republic of Moldova, or. Chisinau, bd. Cuza-Vodă, 1/5 Telefon / Fax: +373 22 00 99 74

E-mail: secretariat@initiativapozitiva.md

Link: [http://old.cnam.md/httpdocs/editorDir/file/Amplasare/1/Datele-de-contact-Serviciile-DRB_20_03_17\(1\).pdf](http://old.cnam.md/httpdocs/editorDir/file/Amplasare/1/Datele-de-contact-Serviciile-DRB_20_03_17(1).pdf)

Accessibility and transparency risk mitigation services by covering with additional HIV/AIDS and STI prevention services

NGO "Positive Initiative"

Republic of Moldova

Main goals

Main goal of the project:

Reducing the risk of HIV and STI infection among vulnerable key groups (injecting drug users, commercial sex workers and men who have sex with men) through the coverage of supplementary (additional) HIV/AIDS prevention services and sexually transmitted infections according to the Standard for the organization and operation of HIV/AIDS prevention services among key populations, including young people from these groups.

Specific project objectives:

1. Ensure that 950 youth from key vulnerable groups have access to the supplementary package of HIV/AIDS and STI prevention services.
2. Provide 950 youth with services in the 'case management' format, drawn up for each service beneficiary, in a multidisciplinary approach.
3. Develop partnerships with medical and social institutions, as well as with services within the state structures, NGOs and the private sector to implement the readmission to a wider range of necessary services.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☒ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☒ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Target groups

Key vulnerable groups, namely: injecting drug users (IDUs), female commercial sex workers (CSWs) and men who have sex with men (MSM) in the Central and Southern regions of the Republic of Moldova (in total 950 persons).

Description of Intervention

1. Ensuring Access to Medicines, Disinfectant Solutions, and Health Maintenance Products: Throughout the project, A.O. "Positive Initiative" and its partners meticulously ensured

access to essential medicines, disinfectant solutions, and health maintenance products. They distributed these items according to a predefined list of over-the-counter medications. This distribution was accompanied by detailed instructions and education on the proper use of these products. Beneficiaries were informed

2. about the importance of maintaining hygiene and health through the regular use of these products. By ensuring that everyone understood how to use the medicines and disinfectants correctly, the project aimed to reduce the incidence of infections and other health complications.
3. Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis for HIV (PrEP):
4. The project provided Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) to individuals who were eligible, based on a thorough screening process. Staff members meticulously monitored the correct usage of PrEP among the beneficiaries to ensure its effectiveness. Regular follow-ups and assessments were conducted to monitor adherence and to manage any side effects. This component was crucial in reducing the risk of HIV transmission among high-risk groups, contributing to the overall goal of reducing HIV prevalence in the community.
5. Post-Exposure Prophylaxis for HIV:
6. In cases of accidental exposure to HIV, the project offered immediate evaluation and management. This included rapid HIV testing and the initiation of prophylactic antiretroviral treatment when necessary. Beneficiaries were provided with a clear plan that included follow-up testing at six and twelve weeks post-exposure to ensure comprehensive monitoring. The timely intervention in such cases significantly reduced the risk of HIV infection following accidental exposure, providing peace of mind and a safety net for those affected.
7. Informative and Educational Materials:
8. A critical aspect of the project was the provision of informative and educational materials. These materials covered a wide range of topics, including the risk factors for various diseases such as HIV, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), tuberculosis (TB), and viral hepatitis (HVC, HVB). The educational content also included guidance on the correct use of medications and strategies for overdose prevention. By distributing these materials, the project empowered beneficiaries with knowledge that enabled them to make informed decisions about their health and well-being. This education played a pivotal role in prevention and early intervention, ultimately reducing the burden of disease in the community.
9. Referral and Accompaniment to Medical and Social Services:
10. The project ensured that beneficiaries had access to necessary medical and social services through a robust system of referral and accompaniment. Staff members facilitated appointments with healthcare providers, including specialists such as narcologists, psychiatrists, and infectious disease doctors. They also accompanied beneficiaries to these appointments to provide support and ensure that they received the care they needed. This hands-on approach helped to break down barriers to accessing care, such as transportation issues or fear of stigmatization, thus improving health outcomes.
11. Self-Help Groups:
12. To foster a sense of community and mutual support, the project organized self-help groups. These groups provided a safe space for beneficiaries to discuss common problems and identify solutions together. Participants could share their experiences, offer support to one another, and develop coping strategies for dealing with their challenges. The self-

help groups also facilitated peer learning, where individuals could learn from the experiences of others who had faced similar issues. This component of the project played a vital role in building resilience and fostering a supportive community network.

13. Legal, Psychological, and Social Assistance:

14. Recognizing the multifaceted needs of beneficiaries, the project provided comprehensive access to legal, psychological, and social services. Legal assistance included counseling and representation for those facing legal issues related to their health status or circumstances. Psychological services offered counseling and therapy to help individuals cope with mental health challenges, trauma, and substance use disorders. Social assistance included support with housing, employment, and social integration. By addressing these diverse needs, the project aimed to improve the overall quality of life for beneficiaries and promote long-term recovery and stability.

15. Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Services:

16. The project also emphasized the importance of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. Beneficiaries had access to family planning services, contraception, and prenatal care. These services were designed to ensure that individuals could make informed choices about their reproductive health and

17. receive the care they needed. By providing comprehensive SRH services, the project helped to prevent unintended pregnancies, reduce the transmission of STIs, and support healthy pregnancies and births.

18. Violence Prevention Services:

19. Education and counseling for violence prevention were integral components of the project. Beneficiaries received information on how to recognize and prevent various forms of violence, including domestic violence, sexual violence, and substance-related violence. Counseling services provided support to those who had experienced violence, helping them to heal and recover. The project also facilitated referrals to victim support services for additional assistance. By addressing violence prevention, the project aimed to create safer environments for beneficiaries and reduce the incidence of violence-related trauma.

20. Gender-Sensitive Services:

21. Understanding that gender-specific needs must be addressed, the project provided gender-sensitive services tailored to the unique needs of beneficiaries. These services included medical and psychological assistance designed specifically for women, men, and transgender individuals. The project recognized the importance of addressing issues such as gender-based violence, reproductive health, and the different ways that substance use and health issues affect individuals based on their gender. By offering gender-sensitive services, the project ensured that all beneficiaries received appropriate and effective care.

22. Motivation and Attractiveness Enhancement Services for Harm Reduction Programs (PRR):

23. To motivate beneficiaries and enhance their engagement with harm reduction programs, the project organized various activities and incentives. These activities aimed to make the programs more attractive and accessible to beneficiaries, encouraging their participation. By improving access to HIV prevention services and other harm reduction initiatives, the project sought to reduce the harm associated with substance use and improve health outcomes. These motivational activities included workshops, social events, and tangible incentives such as food vouchers or hygiene kits.

In summary, A.O. "Positive Initiative" and its regional partners implemented a comprehensive

project that addressed the multifaceted needs of vulnerable populations. The project provided a wide range of services, including access to medicines, PrEP and PEP for HIV, informative materials, referrals to medical and social services, self-help groups, legal and psychological assistance, SRH services, violence prevention, gender-sensitive care, and motivational activities for harm reduction. By taking a holistic approach, the project not only improved individual health outcomes but also fostered a supportive and resilient community network. The success of this project underscored the importance of coordinated efforts and community-based interventions in addressing public health challenges and improving the lives of those at risk. Through its comprehensive and collaborative approach, the project set a precedent for future initiatives aimed at supporting vulnerable populations and promoting overall well-being.

Duration and timing of the program

The project was implemented in two phases: Phase I - September-December 2020, Phase II-01-31 January 2021.

Resources utilised (financial, human, material)

Total budget of the project: 750000 lei (39.000 euro)

A.O. Positive Initiative will carry out the project jointly with partners A.O. "Genderdoc-M" with which we will cover with services the Centre region and partners from the South region A.O. "Step by Step South region" (Cahul).

Staff units involved in the implementation of the project (case managers) - 14. (social worker, psychologist, social lawyer).

Comparison Basis

Reference to a similar initiative(s) for comparison

Initiatives in Moldova that align with the actions

United Nations Moldova Achievements in 2023 and Key Focus for 2024:

The UN Moldova Country Team, along with its partners, made progress in various areas, including health services and social assistance. They supported ambitious social reforms, such as Moldova's social assistance system reform, labour market reforms, and early childcare reform. [These efforts aimed to improve the quality of life for vulnerable populations, including women, children, youth, persons with disabilities, refugees, migrants, and the elderly](#)¹.

Link: [United Nations Moldova Achievements in 2023 and Key Focus for 2024](#) IMPACT Initiatives: IMPACT, through its REACH, AGORA, and PANDA initiatives, focuses on research efforts to inform the aid community on various issues, including climate risk. [While not directly related to the actions you mentioned, their work contributes to sustainable development in Moldova](#)².

Link: [IMPACT Initiatives](#) Resource Efficiency in Moldova:

UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization) has been involved in resource efficiency initiatives in Moldova. They trained individuals in dual education models and presented topics related to eco-efficiency and Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production (RECP). [Although not specific to HIV-related actions, their work contributes to overall development](#)³.

UN Women Moldova's Gender Equality Program:

UN Women Moldova, in partnership with UNFPA and funded by the EU, is implementing a program to combat gender stereotypes and gender-based violence. [While not directly related to HIV](#)

[prophylaxis, their initiatives contribute to broader gender equality and social well-being⁴.](#)

Link: [UN Women Moldova - Call for Proposals](#)

Why was this initiative excluded?

Absence of the synergy of the following factors:

- Ensuring Access to Medicines, Disinfectant Solutions, and Health Maintenance
- Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis for HIV (PrEP)
- Post-Exposure Prophylaxis for HIV
- Informative and Educational Materials
- Referral and Accompaniment to Medical and Social Services.

Evaluation of Outcomes

Outcomes:

1. a total of 950 people will be covered by the extended package of services
2. At the end of the project at least 80% of the clients know their status (people who have not been tested for HIV and STIs in the last 6 months (July-December) will be tested, according to the Standard for HIV counselling and testing of vulnerable groups with the use of rapid tests in non-governmental organisations, retesting is carried out every 6 months);
3. At least 80% of clients will be accompanied to the medical facility for confirmation of diagnosis if the rapid test is positive;
4. 100% of the clients, who will be served by implementing the management of case management;
5. 100% of clients who will be provided services based on the individual plan.

Methodology used in the program for assessment (quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods)

Implementation Assessment:

Evaluate distribution processes for medicines and health products, ensuring adherence to guidelines and proper instruction for beneficiaries. Assess screening and monitoring procedures for PrEP and post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV.

Beneficiary Impact Measurement:

Gather feedback from beneficiaries on access to medications, understanding of usage, and effectiveness of educational materials. Monitor HIV transmission rates among those receiving prophylaxis and assess utilization of support services.

Outcome Evaluation:

Analyze health data to measure reductions in HIV transmission and improvements in overall health. Assess changes in beneficiaries' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding disease prevention and medication use.

Feedback and Improvement:

Solicit input from stakeholders to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. Use feedback to refine the action plan, updating strategies and interventions as needed for better outcomes. Foster a culture of continuous improvement by regularly updating assessment methodologies and incorporating new practices.

In order to personalise offered services, the case manager assessed the client's needs, monitored and supported the client to ensure access to social, educational and medical services, referrals to

psychologist, social worker, lawyer, that meet the client's needs.

Key findings and impacts on target group(s)

Access to Essential Products and Medications:

Improved availability and proper usage of medicines and health products, resulting in better health outcomes and reduced illness.

HIV Prevention Services:

Decreased transmission rates through effective PrEP and PEP programs, enhancing community health and awareness of preventive measures.

Comprehensive Support Services:

Enhanced access to medical, social, and psychological support, fostering holistic well-being and reducing barriers to care.

Empowerment and Resilience Building:

Strengthened community support networks, empowering beneficiaries through peer groups and tailored services, leading to improved mental health and social inclusion.

Challenges encountered and how they were addressed

Resource constraints: One common challenge is limited resources, whether it's financial, human, or time-related. This can hinder progress and innovation. To address this, prioritization is key. Identify the most critical tasks or areas and allocate resources accordingly. Collaboration and outsourcing can also help leverage external expertise and resources without significantly increasing costs.

Resistance to change: Change is often met with resistance, whether it's implementing new processes, technologies, or strategies. This resistance can come from employees, stakeholders, or even customers. Effective communication and change management are essential to address this challenge. Clearly communicate the reasons behind the change, involve stakeholders in the decision-making process, and provide training and support to help individuals adapt to the new way of doing things. Local: Mobile clinics distribute and educate in remote areas. Regional: Distribution centers ensure fairness, with staff training. National: Bulk purchases and awareness campaigns are coordinated nationally.

HIV PrEP:

Local: Community groups offer PrEP, aided by peers. Regional: PrEP clinics established, targeting areas in need. National: PrEP integrated into healthcare systems, guided by standards.

HIV PEP:

Local: Hospitals follow standardized PEP protocols. Regional: PEP centers streamline care and referrals.

National: Guidelines ensure consistent PEP practice, with public awareness.

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and re-generation
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behaviour
- ☒ Addictive behavior
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☒ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☒ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

What resources are required for implementation?

Financial Resources: Funding to procure medicines, medical supplies, equipment, and to support staffing, training, and outreach activities.

Human Resources: Trained healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, pharmacists, counselors, and community health workers, are needed to deliver services, provide education, and facilitate support programs.

Infrastructure: Accessible healthcare facilities, distribution centers, clinics, or mobile units are necessary for service delivery. Additionally, information technology infrastructure may be required for data management and communication.

Recommendations for adaptation in other settings if relevant Prioritization of community involvement: Engage local communities in the planning and implementation process to ensure interventions are culturally sensitive and contextually appropriate.

Fostering intersectoral collaboration: Establish partnerships with various stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and community organizations, to leverage resources and expertise for comprehensive support.

Embracing flexibility: Design interventions with built-in flexibility to adapt to evolving needs and circumstances, allowing for effective implementation across diverse settings.

Additional Information and Conclusions

Overall assessment of the initiative's contribution to resilience development

The initiative significantly contributes to resilience development by addressing health challenges through a multifaceted approach. It ensures access to essential medicines, provides preventive services like HIV PrEP and PEP, offers psychosocial support, and promotes education and awareness. At the individual level, beneficiaries gain resources and skills to manage their health, enhancing coping abilities. At the community level, it fosters collaboration and social cohesion through community engagement, support programs, and self-help groups, strengthening collective action and resilience. Systemically, it promotes integration, collaboration, and innovation, enhancing health systems' capacity to respond effectively to crises.

Through partnerships and flexible approaches, the initiative enhances resilience to health shocks and stresses. Overall, its comprehensive strategy demonstrates a significant contribution to enhancing individuals' and communities' ability to withstand and recover from health crises, fostering resilience development.

Supporting documents (reports, publications, website links)

<https://positivepeople.md/upload/info/files/e4f0dkt4gk.pdf>

<http://old.cnam.md/index.php?page=255>

[Link](#) (Inițiativa pozitivă) <https://positivepeople.md/rapoarte/>

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Romania

The Camp in the heart of the village

Tabăra din Inima Satului/ATOR Banatul de Munte

Caras-Severin county, Romania

Main goals

Providing access to development opportunities for children and young people in rural areas through non-formal education.

Offering equal volunteer opportunities to all young people, regardless of their background, through equal participation in the camp's six workshops.

Promoting the local specifics of each rural community by organizing cultural activities.

Promoting the acceptance and integration of all children and young people through life skills and communication workshops and teambuilding activities.

Promoting a healthy lifestyle with healthy principles and habits by supporting workshops on personal development, spiritual formation, artistic creations, life skills education, games, and themed evenings.

Target groups

Children and young people aged 6-18 from rural communities in Caraș-Severin County, from all social backgrounds.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service

☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☐ national
- ☒ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Description of Intervention

The activities organized within the camp program are encompassed in six specific workshops, addressing various current issues for children and young people:

Life skills workshop - Using non-formal education, young people and children learn and discuss notions, ideas, and habits related to sexual life, toxic relationships, addictions, healthy lifestyle, bullying, acceptance, integration, responsible use of technology, and other relevant topics.

Personal development workshop - Using non-formal education, young people and children learn useful notions and practices for managing emotions, time, methods of self-knowledge and personal development, acceptance and understanding of others, time management, handling anxiety-provoking thoughts, and other relevant themes.

Communication and teambuilding workshop - Using non-formal education, young people and children learn effective and responsible communication practices, as well as group management or team integration skills. They are also taught to debate topics that concern them and to argue their points, thus developing critical thinking.

Spiritual formation workshop - Using non-formal education, young people and children explore spiritual questions, discussing topics related to God, promoting healthy moral values and principles, ranging from love and acceptance of others to deeper matters such as the meaning of life.

Games and themed evenings workshop - Young people and children participate in games, competitions, and themed evenings that encourage teamwork, support, and competitiveness, while also promoting and encouraging their personal talents and their expression within an organized performance setting.

Artistic creations workshop - Using various methods from the field of art, children and young people are encouraged to freely express their creativity, creating various unique objects or projects.

This initiative first debuted in 2019 and was/is implemented annually.

Financial resources: Contributions from local partners (municipalities) to cover the costs of each participant's kit (t-shirt, badge, photo album, and prizes).

Human resources: Annually, 130 young volunteers (aged 14-24).

Material resources: Necessary for conducting the workshops mentioned above.

Comparison Basis

The Camp in the Village Courtyard - A similar project organized for children and young people from Iași County. It involves organizing playful, entertaining, and spiritual activities for thousands of children in the county, with a duration of between 1 and 3 days. Their project was inspired by the aforementioned one and adapted to their needs and vision. They aimed to organize camps for children and young people using non-formal learning methods to teach them new information from various fields, complementing their school activities and development, and helping them in life and their formation. The duration of their camps is exactly 5 days, with a more limited reach (reaching a few hundred children and young people in one summer, not thousands), but with a more compact and well-targeted program.

Evaluation of outcomes

Some of the evaluation criteria of success is annual involvement of a larger number of young people from rural areas in volunteer activities.

Development of local initiatives and projects by young people.

Formation of local youth hubs, concretized into youth centers.

Methodology used in the program for assessment were: surveys completed by children, young people, and their parents; meetings organized by specialists in youth work for young people and their parents; follow-up activities, consisting of frequent returns to the respective communities to organize activities for young people with local initiatives.

Key findings: Development of social skills (more open and effective communication with people).

Personal development (young people from diverse social backgrounds integrated into local

initiative groups; young people who manage and communicate their emotions effectively).

Involvement in local or county youth activities and projects, either as beneficiaries or volunteers. Initiative in developing and implementing local activities for children and young people. Development of youth hubs, concretized by establishing local/regional youth centers. Sustaining local activities for children and young people on a permanent basis. Challenges encountered: the reluctance from parents and participants - naturally resolved through participation and their own conviction.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

This program can be adapted in other areas of the country. As evidence, at present, the project is being replicated in the counties of Mehedinți, Olt, and Dolj, by the camp organizing team conducting training sessions for adults and young people from these counties, with the aim of organizing youth camps based on this model. To extend the practice, the following resources would be needed: Human resources: Volunteers, organizing team.

Material resources: Necessary and specific for each camp/workshop, including participant kits.

Financial resources: Involvement of local stakeholders - municipality, school, possibly church.

Additional Information and Conclusions

Organizing follow-up activities in communities, at a set period after the camp's end. Supporting appropriate subsequent activities by both the young people from the community and the volunteer team that supported the camp, for the purpose of evaluating the targeted outcomes. The level of involvement in local activities, volunteering, or initiatives, as well as the level of satisfaction and personal development reported by each young person.

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Health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and re-generation
- ☒ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behaviour
- ☒ Addictive behaviour
- ☒ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☐ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☒ Networking of professional actors
- ☒ Other

Personal development workshops

The Institute of Psychotherapy, Psychological Counselling and Clinical Supervision

Caras-Severin: Resita, Timis: Timisoara

Main goals

Improving self-awareness and personal skill development, enhancing quality of life, and supporting the achievement of personal aspirations and dreams.

Target groups

Young people from the Western region, coming from various backgrounds, including disadvantaged backgrounds, such as NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) youth and Roma, with health issues.

Description of Intervention

By breaking down the implementation into structured stages, the intervention becomes manageable and systematic. Each stage has a defined purpose and contributes to the overall success of the program.

Understanding the group: this initial stage focuses on gathering detailed information about the participants. Understanding their backgrounds, challenges, and needs allows for the development of a tailored intervention plan. Personal interviews, surveys, and group discussions can be used to collect this data.

Ice-breaker exercises: ice-breaker activities play a vital role in reducing initial barriers among participants. These activities foster a relaxed atmosphere and encourage open communication. Interactive games and group activities help participants feel comfortable and willing to engage.

Interaction with group members: promoting direct interaction among participants helps build a sense of community. Group discussions, teamwork exercises, and collaborative projects create opportunities for participants to share experiences and support each other.

Exercises based on group issues: tailoring exercises to address the specific issues faced by the group is crucial. For example, a group struggling with exam anxiety might benefit from relaxation techniques and mock exams to build confidence and reduce stress.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☒ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☐ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☐ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Tracking objectives for each participant: setting individual objectives ensures that each participant has clear goals to work towards. Regular monitoring and adjustment of these objectives help maintain focus

and measure progress. Personalized feedback and coaching sessions can be instrumental in this process.

Securing the group: establishing a safe and non-judgmental environment is essential for the success of the intervention. Participants need to feel secure to express their thoughts and emotions openly. Ground rules and confidentiality agreements can help create this atmosphere.

Discussing issues: encouraging open discussions about personal challenges allows participants to gain insights into their problems. Facilitated group discussions provide a platform for sharing experiences and brainstorming solutions. The presence of a counselor or coach ensures that these discussions remain constructive and supportive.

Awareness exercises on the issue: activities designed to increase self-awareness help participants understand the root causes of their issues. Techniques such as journaling, mindfulness, and guided reflections enable participants to explore their thoughts and emotions deeply.

Intervention: based on the insights gained from previous stages, specific interventions are implemented to address identified problems. These can include individual or group counseling, skill-building workshops, and practical exercises. The aim is to equip participants with the tools and strategies needed to overcome their challenges.

Analysing the achievement of objectives: regular evaluation of progress is essential to ensure that the intervention is effective. Various methods, such as self-assessment, peer feedback, and facilitator observations, can be used to measure the achievement of objectives. This analysis helps in making necessary adjustments to the intervention plan.

Examples of issues addressed:

Stress from the final exams: techniques for managing stress and improving focus are essential for students preparing for significant exams. Time management strategies and study plans can help alleviate the pressure.

Exam anxiety: relaxation exercises, breathing techniques, and exam simulations can reduce anxiety and build confidence. Participants learn to manage their nerves and approach exams with a positive mindset.

Communication issues: effective communication is a vital skill. Exercises in active listening, clear expression, and constructive feedback help participants improve their interpersonal interactions.

Time management: learning to prioritize tasks and manage time efficiently is crucial for reducing stress. Participants can benefit from techniques such as goal setting, scheduling, and time-blocking.

Self-confidence: activities aimed at boosting self-esteem and self-efficacy help participants believe in their abilities. Role-playing scenarios and positive affirmations are practical exercises for building confidence.

Relationship issues: developing empathy and conflict resolution skills is essential for healthy relation-

Overcoming procrastination: techniques to combat procrastination include setting clear goals, breaking tasks into manageable steps, and maintaining motivation. Participants learn to overcome delays and work towards their objectives consistently.

Emotional management: recognizing and managing emotions is vital for overall well-being. Exercises in emotional regulation, such as mindfulness and stress reduction techniques, help participants handle negative emotions effectively.

Counseling and coaching: continuous support through counseling and coaching is crucial for the success of the intervention. Regular sessions provide participants with guidance, encouragement, and constructive feedback. Whether conducted individually or in groups, these sessions help participants stay focused on their goals and navigate challenges effectively.

By following this structured and comprehensive approach, the intervention aims to enhance the well-being and personal development of the participants. The focus on individualized strategies, continuous monitoring, and tailored support ensures that the intervention meets the specific needs of each participant, leading to positive and lasting outcomes.

The duration of the Workshops: 4 hrs/ week, maximum 12 people per session.

Resources needed: Human resources: The multidisciplinary team includes psychologists, psychotherapists, and special guests, such as doctors or other individuals of relevant interest.

Spaces: Sessions are held in a room, suitable space, or professional office, ensuring an environment conducive to personal development activities.

Necessary materials: Various resources are used for the activities, including a video projector, board, flipchart, laptop, paper, pens, markers, and other stationery materials.

Example activity: A specific exercise involves the symbolic burning of an object or a note on which something the participants wish to release from their lives is written.

Comparison Basis

In Romania, best practice methods for personal development workshops include support groups, individual coaching, thematic workshops, soft skills training, mindfulness and meditation courses, career counseling sessions, the "School for Parents" program, and teambuilding activities.

Personal development workshops offer an interactive and practical approach, focusing on concrete and applicable exercises, such as the symbolic burning of notes to release problems. Support groups provide an emotional and mutual framework, facilitating open discussions, while individual coaching focuses on the personal needs and goals of each participant, offering personalized support.

Thematic workshops and soft skills training address specific skills and are similar to workshops in their practical and interactive nature. Mindfulness and meditation courses focus on relaxation and self-awareness techniques, complementing personal development through holistic approaches.

Career counseling and teambuilding are oriented towards professional development and interpersonal relationships, being useful in work contexts and teams. In comparison, personal development workshops integrate elements from all these methods, offering a comprehensive and versatile approach for personal and professional growth.

We chose our model because of its integrated and holistic approach. It is capable of addressing various aspects to ensure sustainable and efficient personal development. By integrating different methodologies and practices, our model looks at the individual as a whole, considering emotional, mental, and professional growth. This comprehensive approach allows participants to work on multiple facets of their development simultaneously, leading to more balanced and enduring outcomes. By addressing a broad spectrum of needs and challenges, our model promotes a well-rounded and resilient personal development journey.

Evaluation of Outcomes

There is no formal assessment tool; the only evaluation is related to the achievement of personal goals through feedback forms. This means that the success of the personal development process is measured by how well participants meet their own set objectives. Instead of standardized tests or evaluations, participants are encouraged to reflect on their progress and provide feedback on their experiences. These feedback forms allow individuals to assess their growth and development based on the goals they set at the beginning of the program. This personalized approach ensures that the evaluation is directly relevant to each participant's unique journey, fostering a more meaningful and individualized understanding of their achievements and areas for improvement. Focusing on personal goals, the evaluation process becomes a tool for self-reflection and continuous growth.

As a methodology, only FOCUS GROUP: The qualitative method of focus group discussions is preferred in personal development workshops because it allows participants to explore topics in depth, benefit from social interaction and emotional support provided by other members, generates a wide range of ideas and perspectives, and provides real-time feedback for adapting activities. This interactive and engaging approach facilitates the exchange of ideas and provides support in the process of personal growth, adding a human and social dimension that cannot be achieved through other research or interaction methods.

Key findings:

"Achieving objectives" refers to the workshop's ability to help participants reach their personal development goals. By providing relevant tools and resources, the workshop aims to encourage participants to take concrete steps toward self-improvement.

"Well-being" refers to the positive impact the workshop has on participants' mental health. It should offer a safe, supportive, and non-judgmental environment where participants feel comfortable expressing their emotions and thoughts.

"Workshop accessibility" refers to how easy it is for participants to access and participate in the workshop. This includes aspects such as the workshop's physical location, cost, scheduling, and resource availability. An accessible workshop should be available to a wide range of participants, regardless of their financial situation or geographic location.

Challenges: Space-related limitations, time constraints, series limitation (maximum 12 to ensure

security). A greater number of sessions has been added where needed.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

The group size can be reduced, and on an extra-large scale, it can be adapted only for professional/personal development courses.

By reducing the group size, we can ensure more personalized attention and interaction among participants. This allows for deeper discussions, more individualized feedback, and a more supportive environment for personal growth.

On a larger scale, where space and logistical constraints may limit the number of participants, the focus may shift towards offering specialized courses specifically tailored to professional or personal development needs. This allows for more targeted content delivery and ensures that participants can still benefit from the learning experience despite the limitations in space or time.

Resources required for upscaling: a private space (it can be a classroom, a meeting room, outside in a quiet place), a specialised therapist (psychologist, invited experts on specific topics), pens, papers, items for specific bounding exercises. In this specific case, participants pay for the sessions, it is not a free of charge method as it is made by professionals in an appropriate organized space and time.

This method should be done only with specialized staff, to ensure the safety of the group, first of all, secondly to offer qualitative support during the specific sessions.

Additional Information and Conclusions

Personal development workshops offer a heartfelt approach to resilience-building, focusing on achieving personal goals, enhancing well-being, and ensuring that everyone can participate.

By encouraging participants to set their own goals and supporting them along the way, the method empowers individuals to grow and overcome obstacles, fostering resilience in the face of life's challenges.

The workshops provide a safe and caring environment where participants can openly share their thoughts and feelings, receiving the support they need to thrive. This nurturing atmosphere helps people develop coping skills and build connections, strengthening their resilience and sense of belonging.

Moreover, the method's flexibility in adjusting group sizes and session numbers shows a deep understanding of people's diverse needs and circumstances. This inclusivity ensures that everyone, regardless of their situation, can benefit from the workshops, promoting resilience and

Health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal life-style

☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs

☒ Personal education, knowledge

☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)

☒ Stress management and re-generation

☐ Exercise/physical activity

☐ Nutritional behaviour

☒ Addictive behaviour

☐ Other

Social & community networks

☒ Social support structures / services

☒ Personal social networks

☒ Empowerment/participation

☒ Networking of professional actors

☐ Other

unity within communities.

Overall, the method's contribution to resilience development is profound. It offers not just practical tools, but also genuine care and understanding, empowering individuals to face life's ups and downs with strength, compassion, and resilience.

<https://www.psyntegra.com/en/cercetare-publicatii/> <https://www.psyntegra.com/en/despre-noi/>
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Inclusive Youth Centre Program (IYCP)

Nevo Parudimos Youth Centre

Resita, Caras-Severin

Main goals

The main aim of the Inclusive Youth Center Program (IYCP) is to motivate, empower and strengthen the skills of young people in Resita and Caras-Severin county by developing their personal and social capacities to effectively cope with and adapt to day to day challenges. This way, the young people increase their self confidence and sense of belonging to the community, with benefits on their personal and professional development.

Target groups

The program primarily targets adolescents and young adults aged 12 to 24, with a particular focus on those who are at risk of social, economic, or psychological challenges. This includes youth dis- advantaged communities in the area (Mociur, Dealu Mare, Calnic), youth from rural areas (villages around Resita city), young Roma people, youth with different types of disabilities (mental or phizical), youth that struggles with different types of difficulties such as anxiety, depression, trauma, addictions.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☐ national
- ☒ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Description of Intervention

The Inclusive Youth Center, a visionary program developed by Nevo Parudimos in Resita city, stands as a beacon of hope and empowerment for the youth of the community. This comprehensive initiative is designed to provide a wide range of daily activities aimed at equipping young individuals with the necessary skills and support to enhance their resilience and navigate the complexities of life. Through its multifaceted approach, the program offers a nurturing environment where young people can thrive, develop essential life skills, and build a strong foundation for their future. At the heart of the Inclusive Youth Center are its five-day-a-week workshops, training sessions, mentorship programs, and community engagement activities. These components form the backbone of the program, offering a consistent and structured framework for youth development. The curriculum, rooted in non-formal education methods, emphasizes interactive and inclusive activities that engage participants in meaningful learning experiences. This dynamic approach ensures that the youth are not passive recipients of information but active contributors to their own growth and development. The workshops at the Inclusive Youth Center are meticulously designed to cover a broad spectrum of essential life skills. Participants engage in

sessions focused on emotional intelligence, where they learn to recognize, understand, and manage their emotions effectively. This skill is crucial for personal well-being and interpersonal relationships, helping young people navigate social interactions with empathy and insight. For instance, a typical workshop on emotional intelligence might involve activities such as identifying and labeling emotions, understanding the impact of emotions on behavior, and developing strategies for emotional regulation.

Stress management workshops provide practical strategies for coping with the pressures of daily life, enabling youth to maintain mental and emotional balance in challenging situations. These workshops might include techniques such as mindfulness meditation, deep-breathing exercises, and time management skills. Participants learn to identify sources of stress, understand their stress responses, and apply coping mechanisms that can help them remain calm and focused under pressure.

Effective communication is another cornerstone of the program, with activities that enhance verbal and non-verbal communication skills. Through role-playing, group discussions, and interactive exercises, participants learn to express themselves clearly and listen actively, fostering mutual understanding and collaboration. For example, a communication workshop might involve scenarios where participants practice giving and receiving feedback, resolving conflicts, and using body language effectively to convey their messages.

Problem-solving and decision-making workshops equip youth with critical thinking skills, enabling them to approach challenges methodically and make informed choices. These sessions often involve real-life scenarios and group problem-solving tasks, providing hands-on experience in navigating complex situations. Participants might work on case studies, engage in brainstorming sessions, and develop action plans to address specific problems, thereby enhancing their ability to think strategically and make sound decisions.

In addition to these core workshops, the Inclusive Youth Center offers a robust mentorship program. This element pairs young beneficiaries with trained mentors who provide personalized guidance and support. Mentors play a crucial role in the personal and academic development of the youth, offering advice on career paths, educational opportunities, and personal growth. Each participant is assigned a dedicated mentor, ensuring that they receive consistent support and encouragement. Regular face-to-face meetings, held at least twice a month, allow mentors and mentees to build strong, trusting relationships. These interactions provide a safe space for youth to discuss their challenges, set goals, and receive the motivation needed to overcome obstacles and achieve their aspirations.

Mentorship at the Inclusive Youth Center is tailored to meet the unique needs of each participant. Mentors work closely with their mentees to develop individualized development plans, setting short-term and long-term goals that align with the young person's interests and aspirations. This personalized approach ensures that each participant receives the guidance and support necessary to navigate their specific circumstances, whether it involves academic challenges, career planning, or personal issues. Beyond individual development, the Inclusive Youth Center places a strong emphasis on community engagement and active citizenship. Monthly community activities are integral to the program, encouraging young people to participate in service projects, volunteering opportunities, and civic initiatives. These activities are designed to foster a sense of belonging and purpose, connecting youth to their community and instilling a sense of responsibility and civic duty. Through community service, participants gain valuable experiences that enhance their personal growth and resilience, while also contributing

positively to society.

For example, youth might engage in environmental cleanup projects, helping to beautify local parks and public spaces. They might also volunteer at local events or community centers, providing support to those in need. Civic engagement activities could include participating in local government meetings, organizing awareness campaigns on social issues, or advocating for policy changes that benefit the community. These experiences not only build practical skills but also instill a sense of pride and ownership in the participants, encouraging them to become active, engaged citizens.

The holistic approach of the Inclusive Youth Center addresses the diverse needs of young individuals, providing continuous support for their personal and professional development. The program recognizes that resilience is not just about overcoming adversity but also about building a strong, supportive network and developing a broad range of skills and competencies. By offering a safe and inclusive environment, the center enables youth to explore their potential, develop self-confidence, and cultivate a proactive approach to life's challenges.

Moreover, the Inclusive Youth Center's commitment to inclusivity ensures that all participants, regardless of their background or circumstances, have access to these valuable resources. The program is designed to be adaptable and responsive to the needs of each individual, providing tailored support that acknowledges and respects their unique experiences and aspirations. This inclusivity is reflected in the diverse range of activities and learning methods, ensuring that every participant can find something that resonates with them and supports their personal journey.

The program's adaptability is particularly important in addressing the needs of marginalized or vulnerable youth, such as those from low-income families, minority groups, or those with special needs. By providing a welcoming and supportive environment, the Inclusive Youth Center ensures that every young person has the opportunity to succeed and thrive, regardless of their starting point. This commitment to equity and inclusion is a fundamental principle of the program, guiding its design and implementation.

In essence, the Inclusive Youth Center is more than just a program; it is a community of support, growth, and empowerment. By fostering an environment where young people can learn, grow, and thrive, it lays the foundation for a resilient and empowered generation. The impact of the program extends beyond the individual participants, as they carry the skills, values, and experiences gained at the center into their wider communities, contributing to a more resilient and vibrant society.

The Inclusive Youth Center exemplifies the transformative power of holistic youth development programs. Through its comprehensive and inclusive approach, it equips young people with the tools they need to navigate life's challenges, build strong relationships, and contribute positively to their communities. As the youth of Resita city continue to benefit from this innovative program, the ripple effects of their growth and resilience will undoubtedly be felt for years to come, creating a legacy of empowerment and positive change.

In conclusion, the Inclusive Youth Center, developed by Nevo Parudimos, stands as a model of effective youth empowerment. Through its diverse and comprehensive activities, it provides young people with the skills, support, and opportunities they need to thrive. By emphasizing emotional intelligence, stress management, effective communication, problem-solving, decision-making, mentorship, and community engagement, the program creates a holistic framework for youth development. Its commitment to inclusivity ensures that all young people, regardless of their background, have the chance to succeed. The Inclusive Youth Center is not just building resilience

in individuals but is also fostering a stronger, more cohesive community. As participants grow and flourish, they contribute to a cycle of positive change, demonstrating the profound impact of investing in youth empowerment.

Timeframe: Monday to Friday between 17-19hr.

Financial resources: several projects the NGO has ongoing provide the material support for the activities.

Human resources involve a program coordinator, facilitators, mentors and administrative staff that are part of Nevo Parudimos team.

Materials: workshop materials, training resources, office supplies

Comparison Basis

We tried to apply this program but with direct independent involvement of the young people in the local community. We provided resources and the space and encouraged them to organize and facilitate their own initiatives and workshops on thematics of interest.

Evaluation of Outcomes

We take into consideration several criteria for the evaluation of our program such as: participant engagement, measuring the active involvement of youth in program activities and community projects, skill development, program satisfaction, community impact.

We evaluate our program through several ways. Each activity has an attendance list to keep track of the involvement of the beneficiaries, each activity is followed by an online questionnaire to assess the program satisfaction, after gaining skills workshops we have a pre learning assessment form and final one to address the increase in knowledge and skills of the beneficiaries. Mentors have to create reports after each meeting with the young people. The community impact is addressed by the feedback we get at community level after our public activities.

Methodology: Quantitative methods: numerical data, such as attendance list and skill improvement measurements through pre and post learning assessment (forms), Qualitative methods:

insights through interviews, surveys, and observations. Key findings:

- enhanced life skills such as improved communication, problem-solving abilities, and increased resilience, among the young beneficiaries
- increase in community engagement and leadership among the target group, evidenced by their

Health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal life-style

☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs

☒ Personal education, knowledge

☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)

☒ Stress management and re-generation

☒ Exercise/physical activity

☒ Nutritional behaviour

☒ Addictive behaviour

☒ Other

Social & community networks

☒ Social support structures / services

☒ Personal social networks

☒ Empowerment/participation

☒ Networking of professional actors

☒ Other

- active involvement in community projects and initiatives
- increased sense of belonging and empowerment among young participants
- greater self-confidence and a stronger sense of purpose
- empowered local youth to make positive contributions to their communities.

Several challenges were encountered during program implementation.

One significant challenge was participant retention, as some youth faced low self-esteem or lack of motivation to get involved. To address this, we motivate them constantly through appealing themes for the workshops and activities that cover their areas of interest. We also offer personalized support to accommodate participants' needs and ensure their continued engagement. One more challenge would be the lack of responsibility (young people from disadvantaged communities in particular have to go to work or have several duties in their families – taking care of younger siblings). To cover this, our activities follow a flexible schedule.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

The program focuses on foundational life skills, leadership development, mentorship, and community engagement can be tailored to suit the specific needs and contexts of diverse populations. By adjusting program content, delivery methods, and resource allocation, it can be effectively adapted to different age groups, cultural backgrounds, and geographical locations.

For example, it could be implemented for adults with same needs, covering different topics but addressing the same problems – life skills, empowerment and mentoring. Also, by accessing different funds, it could be implemented at a transnational level, fostering exchange of experience in between groups of people from different countries, aiming at covering also intercultural matters and foreign language study, social skills development etc. Overall, the program is adaptable and could be suited for replication and expansion, offering a good practice example for empowering youth and promoting resilience across various contexts and scales, that could be implemented at a bigger scale and with different types of audience.

Implementation of the program at the level it is covered now by Nevo Parudimos (local and regional level) requires financial resources for covering the location, the contracted mentors, contracted facilitators, staff and materials.

Also, it requires a team of people involved such as coordinator of the program, several facilitators for the workshops, mentors for participants, and volunteers to cover the logistics. Each play vital roles in program delivery and support.

Material resources include workshop materials, training resources, office supplies, and community project materials.

Finding different larger funding opportunities would be recommended if willing to implement the program at a higher level.

Additional Information and Conclusions

The initiative contributes to resilience development among young people by equipping them with essential life skills, leadership abilities, active community engagement and offering a safe space to develop themselves personal and professional. The program builds strong support networks at regional level, fosters a sense of belonging, and promotes personal growth enhancing the

resilience of young participants empowering them to overcome different life obstacles.

<https://nevoparudimos.ro/youth-center/?lang=en> Facebook: Asociatia Nevo Parudimos Instagram: nevo_parudimos
nevoparudimos@gmail.com, alina.bosanceanu@nevoparudimos.ro – Alina Bosanceanu (Youth Center coordinator from Nevo Parudimos Association)

Serbia

Girls' centre

City of Novi Sad, Serbia, implemented by Know How Center.

Main goals

The project is a socio-educational program aimed at girls and young women in the territory of the city of Novi Sad. The overall goal of the project was to dedicate greater attention to the prevention and promotion of mental health among youth, especially girls and young women in Novi Sad, through individual counselling and group work (holding thematic workshops).

The specific objectives of the program were:

1. Contribute to the prevention and promotion of mental health for girls through holding thematic workshops on mental health topics.
2. Enhance the mental health of girls through individual psycho- logical counselling for youth dealing with issues of growing up.

Target groups

Direct beneficiaries: Girls and young women aged 16-25 who live or reside in the territory of the city of Novi Sad.

Indirect beneficiaries:

1. Families of girls and young women
2. Peers of girls and young women
3. General public through media promotion

Description of Intervention

The psychological counselling centre for girls and young women was established with two main components:

1. Thematic group workshops on mental health (improving communication skills, understanding emotions, managing emotions, personal development and problem-solving orientation, coping with stress, conflict prevention and resolution, violence prevention, digital violence).

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☐ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☒ municipal

2. Individual psychological counselling for girls and young women dealing with issues of growing up.

Comparison Basis

There are initiatives in the City of Novi sad including local network of organizations for psychosocial support and mental health prevention, which are mostly focused on individual work and are not primarily gender sensitive in terms of targeting specific needs of girls. KHC decided to conduct both, group and individual work with young women and girls.

KHC conducted a research in 2017 (available at https://cpzv.org/cpzv_uploads/Mentalnozdravlje%20dih-u-APV.pdf). The results suggest that the symptoms of stress in the Vojvodina youth are more prominent compared to the findings of international studies. Girls and gymnasium students are affected the most. Chronic overload and daily micro stressors are a predominant cause of stress. Differences were established in several indicators of mental health between girls and boys – girls have more difficulties in most of the tested domains. For girls, compared to boys, the following conditions are more prominent: lower satisfaction with their appearance, more frequent malnutrition, decreased feeling of control of their own lives, lower life satisfaction and lower self esteem, higher degree of stress, exposition to insults and exclusion by peers, somatization, anxiety and social dysfunction. A considerable number of indicators of mental health are related to the financial status of the family: the worse the financial status is, the indicators of mental health are more negative.

The project targeted girls and young women from the territory of the city of Novi Sad, with specific focus on girls from vulnerable population: Roma girls and girls from families with lower socioeconomic status, by providing free of charge services. Engagement with beneficiaries is planned through a media campaign and campaigns in schools in Novi Sad. The Center for Knowledge and Skills Production has agreements with a large number of elementary and high schools thanks to the implementation of other support programs for elementary and high school populations. Additionally, through collaboration with OPEN and the European Youth Capital, we will inform girls who are not included in the school population.

Evaluation of outcomes

This was a small-scale project with small number of beneficiaries. The main indicators for evaluation of achievement of the project success were: Number of girls and young women who expressed satisfaction with the program outcomes; Number of conducted workshops.

Following evaluation methods were used:

Qualitative: Observation during workshops and individual counselling. Quantitative: Questionnaire for workshop participants.

Based on the evaluation findings, the impact on the target groups has been significant. The workshops were overwhelmingly rated as very useful by the participants, with 89% expressing high satisfaction. Additionally, all participants reported being very satisfied with the instructors,

indicating a positive learning experience. The topics of time management, organization, and interpersonal skills were highlighted as particularly beneficial by the participants. Suggestions for improvement were minimal, indicating high satisfaction with the current workshop format. Moreover, participants proposed new topics and programs, demonstrating a desire for ongoing support and education. Overall, participants expressed gratitude for the program's effectiveness in addressing their needs and enhancing their skills and well-being.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

This practice can be replicated in any community with minor adaptations, as the workshops are universal, adjusted to the age of girls/young women. The publications available at the web site of the Know How centre provide scenarios for workshops related to mental health and health in general, among youth. Besides, the monography "Mental health of Youth in Vojvodina" includes methodological guidance for workshop implementation: Workshop as a method of psychological-preventive work with a group, What is necessary for workshop facilitation; What are the basic components of the workshop process; Forms of group work and workshop techniques; How to evaluate workshop. The workshops have been field- tested and proven successful by Know How Centre through several projects implemented from 2012 to 2016.

- Human: educated workshop facilitators, and psychologists educated for implementation of psychological counselling techniques as well as for gender sensitive response
- Safe space for individual and group work- in the premises of Know How Centre
- Financial resources for experts/workshop facilitators and psychologists, as well as for the workshop material

Material resources- technical resources for presentations used on workshops, office stationery

The workshops can be conducted in various settings: in schools, in substandard settlements (for example, informal Roma settlements). If conducted in substandard/informal settlements, it is important to ensure that the space is safe and ensures the privacy of participants.

Additional Information and Conclusions

The initiative has made a significant contribution to the development of resilience among adolescents, evident in their increased satisfaction with workshops, valuable suggestions for improvement, and positive feedback on the effectiveness of

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☐ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☐ Stress management and regeneration
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behaviour
- ☐ Addictive behaviour
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☐ Social support structures / services
- ☐ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☐ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

the program's topics and techniques.

- “Mental health of Youth in Vojvodina” monography available in Serbian:
https://cpzv.org/cpzv_uploads/Mentalno-zdravlje-mladih-u-APV.pdf
- “3 Hurray! for Health in Schools” manual available on Serbian:
https://cpzv.org/cpzv_uploads/3urazazdravlje.pdf

Strengthening mental health through community support networks

Republic of Serbia (Municipality of Šid, Municipality of Ruma, City of Sremska Mitrovica, City of Loznica, Municipality of Kosjerić, City of Užice, City of Prijepolje, City of Sjenica)

Implemented by Psychosocial Innovation Network (PIN)

Main goals

The goal of the project was to contribute to the understanding of the mental health and psychosocial needs of the local population, especially in the context of the challenges brought by the pandemic of the COVID- 19 virus. Through strengthening existing resources and services, as well as adapting services to the needs of local communities, we tried to create a sustainable program of psychosocial support. The project was implemented in municipalities that received support for the development and improvement of psychosocial services in order to increase their availability to vulnerable groups.

Target groups

Target groups are: youth, elderly people and people in psychological crisis.

Description of Intervention

- Research on a representative sample of Serbian citizens and re- search publication on the topic "Mental health in Serbia: Assessment of needs, risk factors, and barriers to obtaining professional support
- Research in 15 cities and municipalities in the Republic of Serbia and research publication on the topic "Mental health in Serbia:
- Availability of psychosocial support services
- These are the first researches of this type in Serbia and the first results on the mental health of the population and barriers to using mental health services.
- Developing individual programs of psychosocial support for young people, the elderly and people in crisis.
- Implementation of the psychosocial support program for young people, the elderly, and people in crisis in eight municipalities in the Republic of Serbia for a period of five months, in cooperation with LGUs and CSW, with the aim of improving the availability of mental health care services in local communities. Local psychologists were hired and trained to

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☐ Non-formal education
- ☒ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☐ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☒ national
- ☒ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☒ municipal

implement programs with the aim of sustainability and ensuring the continuity of service availability at the local area.

- A total of 211 people participated in the psychosocial support program in eight cities, a total of 102 experiential psychosocial support groups were held, a total of 367 individual psychological counselling sessions were held.
- The formation of a multidisciplinary expert group for the improvement of the normative framework of counselling and therapy services and the development of a proposal for a Standard for counselling and therapy services, which the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs took into consideration.
- Implementation of the online campaign "Bas bi bio problem" with the aim of reducing stigma and raising public awareness of the need to improve the mental health care system in Serbia (e.g. <https://psycho-socialinnovation.net/bas-bi-bio-problem/>).

The project was implemented in the period from September 2021 to August 2022.

The activities were carried out with the support of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, through the German-Serbian development cooperation project "Social protection services for vulnerable groups", implemented by GIZ.

Comparison Basis

Initial assessments of the mental health of three target populations: young people, people in crisis and the elderly, show a high level of psychological vulnerability. Despite the expressed need for psychological support, most respondents never used mental health services, which may be due to lack of availability of services, stigma, financial barriers, or the perception that their difficulties are not serious enough. Community-based psychosocial support programs, designed to include mental health promotion and prevention, as well as individual support, have been shown to be effective in improving participants' mental health. Research has confirmed that these programs reduce psychological difficulties and increase the positive capacities of the target groups, although their effects are sometimes short-lived. For long-term mental health improvement, continuity of services and additional testing of optimal program dynamics and duration are necessary. The results indicate the importance and potential of these programs for the improvement of mental health in Serbia, and the need for their continuous financing by local governments.

Evaluation of Outcomes

Improvement of mental health, wellbeing and quality of life of participants of the psychosocial programs. In order to examine whether the programs have positive effects on the participants, we used mixed-methods methodology.

In the quantitative part of the assessment, we measured the participants' mental health status, wellbeing and quality of life before the programs started, immediately after and a month after the programs were conducted. Moreover, in order to have a clearer picture of the results of the programs, we tried to have a control group in each municipality (group of people who did not attend any Program) and to compare it with the experimental (group of people who attended our

Program) If the Program "works", then we expect a significantly greater improvement in mental health in the experimental group than in the control group of respondents. We managed to form control groups for both the programs for the elderly and the people in crisis, but unfortunately not for the program for youth. Based on the quantitative results, we can state that the programs for psychosocial support for youth, the elderly and people in crisis are scientifically proven to "work". More specifically, it is shown that the Program for youth has positive effect on their mental health and quality of life and that increases their mental health literacy.

The Program for elderly has positive effects on the mental health, quality of life and wellbeing of the elderly, and reduces their sense of loneliness. And finally, the Program for people in crisis as well has a positive effect on the mental health of the Program's participants.

The qualitative part of the assessment consists of conducting interviews with the participants of all three programs in order to understand better their experiences as well as their suggestions for the improvement of the programs.

Lack of availability of mental health services

Many individuals from target populations did not have access to needed mental health services due to geographic, logistical, and infrastructural limitations.

Solution: Programs are organized in communities, in premises such as local communities, cultural centers and youth offices, thus increasing the availability of services.

Stigma associated with seeking help

Stigma and social pressures have deterred individuals from seeking psychological support.

Solution: Programs were promoted as part of regular community activities, thus reducing stigma. Also, anonymous services and support were provided in a group format, which further reduced the feeling of stigmatization.

Financial barriers

Many people could not afford the cost of treatment.

Solution: All psychosocial support programs were completely free, thus eliminating financial barriers for participants.

Lack of long-term effect

The effects of the program were often short-lived and did not last long after the program ended.

Solution: The need for continuity of services has been recognized, and the extension of the duration of the program and additional research into the optimal dynamics of participation are planned. Moreover, the project team advocated towards the LGUs to continue the provision of the programs in the community with successful results in 4 out of 8 communities.

Underutilization of mental health services

Most respondents had never used mental health services, which could be due to a lack of information or a perception that the problems were not serious enough.

Solution: Information was increased through promotion and education in the community, which raised awareness of the importance of mental health and available services.

Variability in program attendance

Some participants did not regularly attend all program sessions.

Solution: More flexible schedules and additional incentives for participants were introduced to improve attendance. These challenges were overcome through a combination of adapting the program to community needs, continuous evaluation and improving service accessibility, resulting in successful implementation and positive outcomes for beneficiaries.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

The programs can be adapted for the needs of every community in Serbia. Thus, the programs can easily be replicated across country leading to available and accessible services for those in need.

The programs are very cost-beneficial as for the implementation of the programs it is only required to hire and train a psychologist for the delivery of the programs. The programs can and should be implemented in the community spaces. The only additional costs are costs for printing the materials as well as potentially the transportation for those who live further away, in rural communities, in order to ensure accessibility to everyone in need.

Additional Information and Conclusions

A total of 211 people participated in the psychosocial support program in eight cities, a total of 102 experiential psychosocial support groups were held, a total of 367 individual psychological counselling sessions were held.

The formation of a multidisciplinary expert group for the improvement of the normative framework of counselling and therapy services and the development of a proposal for a Standard for counselling and therapy services, which the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veterans and Social

Affairs took into consideration.

This are the first research of this type in Serbia and the first results on the mental health of the population and barriers to using mental health services.

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☐ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and re-generation
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behaviour
- ☐ Addictive behaviour
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☒ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☐ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

The activity continued through further advocacy activities for the improvement of psychosocial support services as well as the standardization of counseling and therapy services, as well as through the continuation of the provision of psychosocial support in the community through the next project, while in some local communities the support program continued to be available within the official support system (e.g. Program for young people in Užice and Prijepolje, Program for the elderly in Sremska Mitrovica, and Program for people in crisis in Ruma).
<https://psychosocialinnovation.net/bas-bi-bio-problem>
<https://psychosocialinnovation.net/en/strengthening-the-capacity-of-local-communities-to-provide-psychosocial-support-and-mental-health-care-services/>

Irena Stojadinovic, program coordinator: stojadinovic@pin.org.rs

DIALOGUE from ECO anxiety to ECO action

Republic of Serbia, implemented by Friends of Children of Serbia

Main goals

Project DIALOGUE from ECO anxiety to ECO action is an advocacy initiative of young people with decision-makers and the widest community for active involvement of young people in the processes of making and changing sustainable development policies and their impact and their implementation.

The aim of this project is to redirect the hopelessness that young people feel, which is largely caused by environmental changes and poor forecasts for the future they bring, into positive action towards environmental sustainability in which young people will be the driving force and element of change - with the message that society must not forget the power of their influence.

Target groups

Young people, decision makers. The needs of young people targeted by this project are that from an apathetic position "nothing depends on me" or ad hoc (and didactic) green activism at the level of intervention – when the damage already exists, become an active part of introducing fundamental changes. By drawing attention to their views, insights into problems, and joint connections with which they will appear before decisionmakers at the local and national level, peers, and the wider community - increase dialogue and make recommendations for solutions to accumulated environmental and sustainability problems in Serbia.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☐ Non-formal education
- ☒ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☒ national
- ☒ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Description of Intervention

Improving the responsibility and proactivity of decision-makers and public institutions in the field of more efficient solutions to the problems of protection and improvement of the environment and climate change in accordance with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, through direct involvement and participation of young people in public policies.

The specific objectives of the project are:

- Empowering young people to participate in consultation processes with public authorities and involving them in working bodies and groups dealing with these issues
- Empowering young people for watchdog action towards public authorities in the field of sustainable development and climate change, as well as adequate, responsible and organized response when certain decisions directly endanger sustainable development and eco security

of citizens

- Devising mechanisms for visibility of messages and activities of young people and their impact on informing citizens, as well as on the change of consciousness and conscience in the local and national community. Devising a mechanism to reduce "environmental anxiety" of young people through a proactive role in prevention, but also in solving problems that will no longer be "unsolvable, out of influence, cause of anxiety, out of reach of individual influence".

The main activities of the project are:

- A1 Preparatory meeting
- A2 Advocacy Eco Camp
- A3 Realization of Youth Dialogue with data collection for research
- A4 Online meetings of the Working Group (WG) for processing recommendations
- A5 Online meetings of the WG for the preparation of the public debate
- A6 Public debate
- A7 Public campaign to promote research results and recommendations summarized after the public debate
- A8 Making recommendations to all relevant institutions mapped by young people, monitoring feedback.

Number and profile of participants:

Since the project is methodologically based on dialogue, it includes a fairly wide group of direct target groups necessary to achieve the desired results and change.

Direct target groups:

- 5 young people, FCS activists in the field of sustainable development, from different parts of Serbia who are constantly involved in the work of associations in this field and will be one of the pillars of the project.
- 30 young people, participants in the advocacy eco-camp
- 200 young people, participants in public debates, local youth dialogue, workshops
- 800 young people who will participate in the research
- representatives of decision-makers (at the local and national level) - minimum 30 (at online and live events)
- representatives of green organizations - minimum 20
- A minimum of 400,000 young people will be reached through a public campaign. Indirect target groups:
- All young people in RS - Other citizens of RS.

Although the project primarily addresses young people and is for young people, due to the importance of the topic for all RS citizens, it has a great impact on all RS citizens - who are the indirect target group of this project.

The project was implemented in the period from June 2021 to August 2023. The activities were carried out with the support of the ERASMUS + Program in the amount of 19.095 EUR.

Comparison Basis

The project is set as an example of good practice in terms of developing the advocacy potential of young people - from all categories and without exception. Vulnerable categories of young people in Serbia still have limited opportunities for inclusion in social life, especially for influencing decision-makers and reduced access to youth activities, and our project fosters inclusiveness in access.

Evaluation of Outcomes

By involving young people from different backgrounds (minimum 50% from rural and 10 municipalities in Serbia), as well as other groups of young people with reduced opportunities for social engagement (with disabilities, sensory difficulties, and other developmental barriers ...), we have encouraged not only dialogue of young people with decisionmakers and other stakeholders, but among themselves.

The impact of the project is multiple and we can freely say that it is a process project that has a long-term impact on developing mechanisms for youth participation in public advocacy with peers and the professional public, as well as with decision-makers, influencing the entire community. The young people involved in the project are empowered not only for advocacy in the field of sustainable development, but also for civic activism in every field.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

We believe that it is very important that we include young people already in high school, which will directly affect their development as active citizens, but also the development of competencies of their peer community, through peer education and transfer of acquired knowledge and values. In that sense, we see student parliaments as an important mechanism, which FCS has traditionally good and successful cooperation with.

By involving all categories of young people, including those with fewer opportunities, we give everyone an example of good inclusive practice and nurture the value of diversity, as an important component of lifelong learning and values in line with the goals and values of the EU Youth Participation Strategy.

Additional Information and Conclusions

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☐ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and re-generation
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behaviour
- ☐ Addictive behaviour
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☐ Social support structures / services
- ☒ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☒ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

During the project, young people, in addition to advocacy and watchdog approaches, gained

knowledge and skills in communication and mediation, used various digital tools, and participated in creating a public media campaign - gaining a whole set of lifelong skills, knowledge and values. Publication of the results of the conducted research with young people are extremely useful for further research and development of programs in this area, especially bearing in mind that the topic of eco-anxiety and its consequences for youth health and mental health - FCS was the first in Serbia and the region who tackled this topic.

Additional information available at:

<https://prijateljidece.org/odrzan-eko-kamp-za-30-mladih-iz-cele-srbije/?lang=sr>

<https://prijateljidece.org/dijalog-mladih-o-zastiti-zivotne-sredine-do-sada-je-realizovan-u-12-opstina-u-srbiji/?lang=sr>

<https://prijateljidece.org/istrazivanje-o-stavovima-dece-i-mladih-o-zastiti-zivotne-sredine-moje-pravo-na-buducnost-rezultati-istrazivanja/?lang=sr>

<https://bit.ly/44AGzmv>

<https://prijateljidece.org/sta-porucuju-mladi-smernice-mladih-za-njihovo-ukljucivanje-u-zastitu-zivotne-sredine/?lang=sr>

<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2022-1-RS01-KA154-YOU-000071386>

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Slovakia

Program BUDDY

PRO VIDA, civic association

Slovakia

Main goals

It is a programme that helps children from Centres for Children and Families, former orphanages. Its aim is that every child should have a person who helps and supports them - a personal "buddy" or friend. The goal of the program is for children to have the opportunity to build a strong and trusting relationship with an adult who is there just for them.

Target groups

Children aged 12-16, that means children for whom it is more difficult to find a foster family.

Children who do not grow up in their family, but in an institution. They live in a group with other children who have similar stories, under the supervision of educators in the Centres for Children and Families

Description of Intervention

The goal of the program is for children to have the opportunity to build a strong and trusting relationship with an adult who is there just for them. This is important for their future lives because it helps them learn how to build healthy relationships and how to trust people. Through this program, children can gain a valuable friend and support to help them overcome difficult times from the past and better fit into society. However, not everyone can be a volunteer. Once registered, volunteers go through a selection process that takes about 3-6 months. The basic criteria a volunteer must meet are: minimum age of 25, strong intrinsic motivation, mature personality, balance and stability in life (stable job, not currently going through a difficult period and not planning big changes in their life), empathy and understanding for others, willingness to develop themselves and especially the ability to build a long-term relationship.

If a volunteer passes the selection process, they are assigned a child based on similar personality traits, interests and preferences. The distance of the volunteer's residence from the Centre for

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☐ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☒ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☒ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☒ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Children and Families is also an important aspect, as the volunteer should ideally visit the child once a week. The time spent with the child should be fulfilling for both, i.e. activities that are interesting for both the child and the volunteer. For the child, the greatest pleasure is to have someone who is dedicated only to them, who listens to them and who they can rely on.

The program runs throughout the year. Meetings of volunteers with children take place once a week. In the past year, 119 BUDDY pairs were in the active care of the program. A team of psychologists worked with 119 BUDDY volunteers to ensure that they were able to be a reliable and steadfast support for their BUDDY children.

Comparison Basis

Big Brother Big Sister,

<https://www.bigbrothersbigsistersuk.org/> Balu und Du,

<https://www.balu-und-du.de/>

These initiatives are not performed in the area of Slovakia.

Evaluation of Outcomes

Criteria for evaluation:

Children's responses are mapped against key areas important for a successful transition to independent living after leaving their centre, as defined by the Outcome Star™ tool.

Methodology used in the program for assessment:

Internal survey using a standardised questionnaire for volunteers are used for assessment of the program – Match Characteristics Questionnaire and an annual questionnaire about BUDDY pairs for staff at the Centres.

A child's close relationship with a BUDDY volunteer enhances the child's ability to find a job, housing, build stable healthy relationships, and not be dependent on government assistance. Therefore, programs that invest early in children's lives tend to have greater benefits compared to those that already address homelessness or addictions. This could be measured by Social return on investment (SROI). However, it is not measured by this organization yet.

Key findings and impacts on target groups:

- more active and motivated
- more independent
- happier and more content
- change in attitude, different view of the world
- improvements at school and different life skills
- change in behaviour and better control over their emotions
- higher self-esteem and self-confidence

- openness and ability to communicate their needs

Challenges encountered and how they were addressed:

Selection of volunteers - they improved the selection process. It consists of 8 parts, is more relevant and takes 3-6 months. It allows us to get to know the personality of the applicant and their ability to provide steady support to child. Sustainable coverage across Slovakia - emphasis on brand awareness, with a nationwide marketing campaign.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

Scalability is very high in area context. The program could be scaled also to other vulnerable groups. Resources required for implementation:

- Internal coordination team
- Donors' sponsorship
- Volunteers

This support program can be adapted to various vulnerable groups. Important is to select motivated volunteers, so the selection process might be the crucial here.

Additional Information and Conclusions

Program Buddy represents a very useful long-term support program with high impact on children's behaviour and development.

Initiative webpage:

<https://tvojibuddy.sk/>

Annual report: https://tvojibuddy.sk/sites/default/files/dokumenty/2022_engk_w.pdf

Volunteers view:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iOkgj8EDcME> Donor's

view: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQQ2rPB5On0>

Promotion videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9cR1BsM8l4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkZYm8pZCus>

Contact information for further inquiries: info@tvojibuddy.sk

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs

☐ Personal education, knowledge

☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)

☐ Stress management and regeneration

☐ Exercise/physical activity

☐ Nutritional behaviour

☐ Addictive behaviour

☒ Other

Social & community networks

☒ Social support structures / services

☒ Personal social networks

☐ Empowerment/participation

☐ Networking of professional actors

☐ Other

Project Chuť žiť

EDI Slovensko, civic association

Slovakia

Main goals

The main mission of EDI Slovakia is to offer quality and accessible assistance to every person and family with eating disorders. That is why its activities built on several pillars: providing quality and accessible assistance to people and families with eating disorders, preparing and implementing prevention and programmes in schools, education of lay and professional public education, advocacy and destigmatisation of the disease. The main project of the organization is the project **Chuť žiť** – it helps youth and families with eating disorders through activities aimed at direct assistance, prevention and education.

Target groups

The main target group of the project`s activities are children and youth under 30 years of age.
Another important target group is parents and important adults. Another group is youth workers and professionals (teachers, coaches, school psychologists, psychologists, special educators, psychiatrists...).

Description of Intervention

The organization provides the following activities to support eating disorders treatment within the project **Chuť žiť** in a free and low- cost option:

- helpline and mail counselling of urgent problems - Helpline represents a free anonymous service for people struggling with eating disorders, self-acceptance, eating or body-shaming, and for their loved ones. Calling the helpline is the first step towards treatment.
- psychological counselling & long-term counselling - consultations with psychologists who have the necessary training in eating disorders to understand what you are going through, as well as the necessary training to help you in crisis situations.
- nutritional counselling - nutritional programme - consultations designed for children 12 years and older and for adults who have eating disorders or unhealthy (disordered) relationships with food.
- peer support - is provided by a peer counsellor - a person who has experience of recovering from eating disorders and drawing on specialist help. The peer uses his or her experience of recovery to support other clients and reinforce their motivation for treatment and hope that even with the limitations that can stem from mental illness, it is possible to live a happy and fulfilling life.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☐ Non-formal education
- ☒ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☐ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☒ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

- multidisciplinary programme - A unique service where you get intensive support from a whole team of experts - psychologist, nutritionist and peer consultant for 3 to 6 months. We work with children, adolescent and adult clients ages 12 and up and with families. We specialize in the spectrum of eating disorders (anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge eating disorder, orthorexia nervosa, ARFID, non-specific or atypical forms of eating disorders) along with their comorbid, or co-occurring, disorders. We also work with themes of self-image, self-esteem, body image and body dysmorphia, self-acceptance, and disordered relationships with food (emotional eating, binge eating...). This activity includes: 20 meetings with a psychologist, 20 meetings with a nutritionist, 10 meetings with a peer consultant, 4 assessment meetings with all professionals, 6 support consultations for family members
- community space - There are two forms: for people with eating disorders and for parents with children with eating disorders. Each group is led by a facilitator (psychologist, psychiatrist or peer consultant). The aim of the groups is to share their successes and failures and to support each other on the road to recovery together with the other participants.
- therapeutic group - The course of the group is structured and in addition to sharing and supporting each other, therapeutic guidance and various exercises are also present. The aim of the group is to guide the participants to understand their behaviour and experience, encouraging them to self-discover, self-care and perceive their own self-worth, strengths and abilities to live a fulfilling, quality life.
- online support groups (for people with eating disorders and for parents of children with eating disorders) - Groups are held regularly online via the ZOOM app. All support group dates are published one month in advance in the calendar below on this page. We also post information about support groups on social media (Instagram or Facebook) to announce any changes. Registration is required for each online event. Online support groups for people with eating disorders are only for people with eating disorders or people who are directly affected by the topics of negative self-image or disturbed relationship with food. The online support groups for parents of children with eating disorders are only for parents of children with eating disorders. These online events are not a place for psychology enthusiasts or for the lay or professional public.
- treatment and educational programme - intended for pupils in the second cycle of primary schools and for students in secondary schools. The content of the programmes is comprehensive, interactive and developed by experts. The treatment and education program is a group program based on regular weekly meetings for 10 to 12 weeks. The meetings take the form of practical workshops focused on a specific topic, with the education complemented by the sharing of experiences and opinions of the participants present. The programme is built on a coherent methodology, so it is not possible to sign up for only one selected workshop. The therapeutic-educational programme is implemented in two forms: for people with eating disorders and for parents of children with eating disorders.

The activities of the program run throughout the year.

Resources utilised (financial, human, material):

- Organizational team – 7 persons
- General Assembly, Board of Directors and the professional guarantor – 6 persons
- Nutrition team – 6 persons
- Psychological team – counselling – 8 persons
- Psychological team - distance counselling and prevention – 6 persons
- Community team – 6 persons

- Supervisors – 3 persons
- External collaborators – 5 persons
- Financial support from various partners e.g.: organizations and foundations, individual donors

Comparison Basis

Similar initiative focused on mental health support and prevention of mental diseases in Czech Republic: Nevypušť duši: <https://nevypustdusi.cz/>

This initiative is not performed in the area of Slovakia.

Evaluation of Outcomes

Criteria for evaluation:

- Number of clients on project activities (counselling sessions, participation on workshops and online webinars)
- Number of schools participating in comprehensive prevention program
- Number of prevention workshops organized

In 2023, 5151 people aged from 12 to approximately 75 years of age. Of these, 2004 people benefited from vocational direct support services and 3,147 children received our prevention activities. 44 physical support group meetings and 62 online support group meetings were organized. 209 schools were included into Comprehensive prevention programme. 18 individual workshops were organized at schools not participating in comprehensive prevention programme.

Methodology used in the program for assessment (quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods):

Feedback methods are used for collection of participants ideas and experiences about the program/project activities. This was ensured by two forms:

- anonymous questionnaire
- direct personal individual interviews

Key findings and impacts on target groups:

An important factor was mobilizing the family and the family environment where the stabilized participants were leaving. In many cases joint sessions with the family helped cooperation with participant. There was a change in the parents' communication towards children, parents were already giving them more space and children were more independent. A separate group was created for parents where they shared experiences with each other. Some parents are still participating in the group activities even though their child is no longer in therapy. Thanks to the group they have a better understanding of children's problems. Initial fears of an age difference proved to be unfounded and cooperation with both participants and experts worked very well. The participants were very motivated and their practical personal experience was invaluable.

Challenges encountered and how they were addressed:

The problem is the high cost of the service, which is currently not covered by any health or social insurance, as well as being very limited the possibilities of subsidy schemes that would be able to provide the service to cover the clients.

Thanks to the acquisition of new funding partners, they can start a new multidisciplinary programme.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

This practice can be adapted and scaled by implementing more health relevant topics into the initiative`s scope.

Resources required for implementation:

- Group of psychologists,
- peer consultants,
- organizational staff,
- web platform

This initiative can be adapted to other specific mental health topic as a main theme by including specialists from that area and especially to include peer consultants from the specific mental health area to be part of the initiative.

Additional Information and Conclusions

Strengths of the programme is that it provides young people with information on healthy eating and exposes them to the real truth about diets. The programme also provides them with information how to help a person on whom they would notice in their neighbourhood that the person exhibits behaviours that could be related to eating disorders. The related online platform <https://we-binare.chutzit.sk/> was created with the aim of creating an online space with comprehensive educational and support content for income eating disorders, that is accessible to people wherever they are. It has the advantage of bringing expert information closer without the need to wait long periods of time for appointments with busy experts. Within the platform, people with eating disorders, parents, professionals and the general public will find a wealth of content, tailored to the target groups and focused on prevention, awareness and education.

Initiative webpage: www.chutzit.sk

Annual report:

https://chutzit.sk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Vykaz-cinnosti-2023_V3.pdf

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☐ Stress management and re-generation
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☒ Nutritional behaviour
- ☐ Addictive behaviour
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☐ Personal social networks
- ☐ Empowerment/participation
- ☒ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

Guidelines for peer support:

https://chutzit.sk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/chutzit_pri-rucka_SK.pdf

Contact information for further inquiries: kontakt@chutzit.sk

IPčko crisis counselling service

IPčko, civic association

Slovakia

Main goals

Main goal of this initiative is to help young people who find themselves in difficult, adverse situations. They are scarred by trauma, experiencing violence, feeling alone and abandoned, wanting to end their lives. IPčko mainly consists of volunteers (psychologists and social workers). They provide professional expert assistance in safe space and anonymity. The help is mostly offered online via IPčko helpline service comprising chat, e-mail and phone options as well as via possibility to meet with professionals in person in selected contact points in different regions across Slovakia.

Target groups

Young people under 30 years with serious life situations and in crisis of any kind.

Description of Intervention

Research confirms that people's behaviour in the online space brings more openness and a 'loss' of natural inhibitions, and it is good and useful to use these facts in psychological intervention. The online world was the place to reach out to young people and help them if they needed it. To help people with difficulties, IPčko has developed a comprehensive set of tools in both online and off-line spaces that they are constantly innovating and developing.

IPčko has a unique project to motivate young volunteers and thus multiply the helping effects synergistically. The young psychologists who help - there are about 100 of them - are volunteers. They are trained psychologists, usually under 25 years of age, who are selected in a rigorous selection process, trained through 330 hours of accredited professional training. They work 12 hours per week under the supervision of an experienced psychologist and undertake regular professional development training, supervision, and interviews. They gain invaluable professional skills and practical helping experience. They train over 40 young professionals in this way per year.

As part of education process, the teams of IPčko regularly take part in different activities which shall help them with diverse and very difficult daily interventions with clients:

- Crisis intervention in the field - The experts from crisis centres Káčko went into the field and took part in a three-day crisis intervention course. During the course they were put in different simulated situations with which are often encountered in the IPčko. For example,

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☐ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☒ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☒ national
- ☒ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

they were looking for a missing woman in the woods, they went out into the field to find a man in crisis who contacted the Crisis Line or worked with a woman in crisis who came directly to Káčko and needed immediate help. In a safe environment and under supervision of experts and professionals, they tried different techniques, methods, crisis management and forms of cooperation. After the actions in the field, more hours of training were awaited and as well as analysis of the situations and procedures in order to be best prepared and prepared for real crisis situations.

- Fundamentals of crisis intervention- Since IPčko is at home in crisis intervention, they want this knowledge, experience and skills to pass on. For professionals and practitioners from helping professions from all over Slovakia, they have organized basic course in crisis intervention in the scope of 20 hours. It was most suitable for psychologists, for social workers, school principals and emergency services.
- Long-term crisis intervention course- Building on the foundations of crisis intervention, the 180
 - hour accredited training that went more into depth. For professionals and practitioners who wanted to delve into the topic, they prepared a group crisis intervention course. The course presented the basic elements of a comprehensive, systematic and multi-component curriculum of crisis intervention and prepared participants to understand the broad spectrum of crisis intervention services. They learned also the basics of stress management in critical incidents and walked away with the knowledge and tools to crisis intervention delivery. Part of training included 12 theoretical training days and 30 hours of field practice under the supervision of lecturers.
- Educational activity: The phenomena of the Internet in the lives of young people- Because they want adults and parents to better understand their children, or young people in general, they have decided to carry out several educational tours around Slovakia. One of them was a tour focused on the phenomena of the Internet and online environment in the lives of young people. At the workshops they introduced adults to what the online world means for young people, what it offers them, how it threatens them and how they can protect themselves, but also what role the family plays in all of this and how they can engage with young people at home and talk about these issues. The workshops were held during all over the country - in every Káčko.
- Educational activity: Help with self-harm The second series of workshops for parents and adults was focused on the topic of self-harm. Workshops titled "Helping with youth self-harm" were again conducted in every Káčko. With the female and male participants, they went through all their questions about self-harm. They talked about why self-harm happens, what these young people are experiencing, how to talk to them about it or where to get help.

There are several activities which are performed by IPčko:

Online and long-distanced help:

- IPčko.sk helpline service - 24/7, anonymous and free of charge chat and email helpline for young people looking for acceptance, help, support and a professional approach from psychologists and social workers in dealing with counselling and crisis situations. Communication in the chat is respectful of the client's cultural, spiritual, ethnic, age, gender,

health and socio-economic circumstances. Services are provided as apolitical and non-discriminatory. After opening the chat interface on IPčko.sk, you enter into individual communication with an advisor of your choice. The counsellor is bound to maintain confidentiality about the things he/she learns from client during the chat. It is not a breach of confidentiality to share experiences between counsellors in supervision meetings, to consult with the counselling coordinator and the counselling centre management about the chat process. Likewise, it is not a violation of this principle if client's life or the life of someone around client is threatened and IPčko.sk act according to the law. In order to protect the counsellor's privacy, he/she will not provide client with any contact details other than the ones on the IPčko.sk website. To enter the online chat room, you need to click on the chat application and enter your nickname. If you want to chat, are looking for more information, need advice on relationships, love, family or bullying at school, or need help, just email one of trained counsellors who are online right now. Mail counselling provides an alternative to counselling chat. With mail counselling you can write more about what you are going through in

- your life, to get answers to more extensive questions or to seek legal advice. Depending on how busy the advice centre is, we aim to respond as soon as possible, up to a maximum of 24 hours.
- Stalosato.sk – specialized platform created and provided by IPčko organization to support children and youth in dangerous online communication related to grooming activity and various forms of online harassment. The platform offers information about grooming, sexual abuse, violence and extortion of children and young people on the internet. In addition to help options and resolution procedures, parents and professionals will also find useful information here. The platform includes detailed instructions on how to prevent such experiences, what activities to watch out for when communicating with strangers, how to verify data and how to think critically. It also offers specific suggestions on how to act in such situations and who to contact for help. It includes also information leaflets for parents and teachers how to act and speak with children and young people about the topic of online abuse.
- Crisis helpline - general helpline for acute life situations. There is a telephone line, but also video calls, chat or e-mail counselling is available. The Crisis Helpline can be contacted by anyone who is experiencing difficult situations in their life like:
 - Experiencing a loss (of a loved one, job, hobby, object, ...)
 - experiencing stress about a financial situation
 - is a victim or witness of domestic or other violence
 - Feeling anxious, fearful, worried, stressed, sad
 - feels helpless, despair, overwhelmed
 - has depressive thoughts
 - contemplates suicide
 - needs psychological or psychiatric help is experiencing another situation in which he/she needs crisis help and support Further offline and personal support activities provided by IPčko organization:
- Káčko- a specific crisis service that is available anonymously to people in acute life crisis and is based on a face-to-face meeting. Crisis Intervention Centres "Káčko" are located in every regional city in Slovakia. The experts from IPčko are trained psychologists and psychologists, ready to listen to everything that Káčko visitors want to talk about anonymously and free

of charge. Káčko is a place where people can get professional help, experience concern, acceptance and prepare for a new start.

- Clubs - low-threshold clubs are safe places for young people to find a space to spend their free time in a meaningful way, but also to find informal psychological support. In these clubs, expertise meets informality, help, experience, interest and development. The clubs organise a regular programme full of various interesting activities and includes a Káčko counselling room.

The activities of the program run throughout the year.

Resources utilised (financial, human, material):

The organization consists of more than 100 expert volunteers and 30 professional employees. The organization trains yearly 40 professionals in 400 hours of trainings. The organization has its own financial resources but also gathers a lot of different fundings- from the state, foundations, regions, cities, commercial companies, insurance companies.

Comparison Basis

- Krízová linka pomoci (for people in crisis regarding COVID-19)- provides help via telephone, chat, email and video
- Linka detskej istoty (for children and youth; for wanted and sexually abused children)- provides help via telephone, chat and email
- Dobrá linka (for youth with disabilities)- provides help via chat, email and video
- Linka detskej dôvery (for children and parents)- provides help via telephone, email, chat and skype
- Linka dôvery Nezábudka (for adults)- provides help via telephone and email
- Viac ako n(i)ck (for children in danger)- provides help via chat and email

The above-mentioned initiatives are not focused on the target group we wanted to describe - which was purely youth under 30 years.

Evaluation of Outcomes

Criteria for evaluation:

How many young people they managed to help and the reflection on the psychological situation of young people, or the situation and challenges they face through very concrete numbers of contacts per specific issue.

Methodology used in the program for assessment (quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods):

Yearly, the organization manages to help 1000 young lives yearly, they make 600 interventions on social media yearly, the organization is contacted by more than 3000 clients. The organization managed to come up with complex tools in both online and offline space which is constantly being renovated and further-developed. The organization is available 24 hours/7 days a week for free, anonymously and professionally.

Key findings and impacts on target groups:

In 2023 there has been:

- 7665 contacts with young people under 30 years about their identity
- 579 contacts in the topic of radicalization of young people
- 1302 helpful and crisis interventions during special situation regarding transit migration in October 2023
- 4219 crisis communications with young people under 30 years from Ukraine
- 2006 contacts in topic of "Burnout syndrome"
- 7172 communications in topic of "Bullying"
- 2646 communications involving "Distrust in the system"
- 2238 counselling and crisis communications with transgender young people

Challenges encountered and how they were addressed:

An example of a new challenge was the need for social interventions as a rapid response in providing counselling services to war refugees from Ukraine. Therefore, a counselling service in Ukraine language has been established by the organization. In their work, they constantly see new topics, problems and ways to approach and help. They actively try new forms of help and activities that go directly to the people we who may be hurting their souls.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

As the main activities of IPčko are located in online space there are wide opportunities to include more specialized topics in the scope of the activities. The prerequisite is to have experts on board in the specialized field of intervention. IPčko could also create more in-person contact points in more cities in Slovakia which would create the possibility for young people to seek psychological help in person which may feel for some people safer and more personal. Also, great idea would be to create wider variety of the Clubs even if someone doesn't necessarily seek psychological help but would like to meet peers and is looking for a meaningful filling of their free time.

Resources are required for implementation:

- Trained expert volunteers,
- Professional employees
- Facilities for Regional Crisis Intervention Centres - "Káčko" clubs
- Online counselling platforms
- Telephone line service
- Financial resources from the state or other support organizations.

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☐ Personal education, knowledge
- ☐ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and re-generation
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behaviour
- ☐ Addictive behaviour
- ☒ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☐ Personal social networks
- ☐ Empowerment/participation
- ☐ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

Additional Information and Conclusions

This initiative is well known at national level. It responds promptly to social challenges and changes in the environment and offers appropriate help to those who seek it. It also per online environment in the lives of young people.

Annual report for 2023: https://ipcko.sk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/04_2024_vyrocná_správa_ipcko_FINAL.pdf

What is IPčko: <https://oz.ipcko.sk/co-je-ipcko/> What is KÁČKO: <https://ipcko.sk/kacko/>

Platform related to grooming activities: <https://www.stalosato.sk/> Crisis helpline platform:

<https://www.krizovalinkapomoci.sk/> Contact information for further inquiries: ipcko@ipcko.sk

Slovenia

A (se) štekaš?!? ("Do you understand your- self?!?")

Slovene Center for Suicide Research

Slovenia

Main goals

A (se) štekaš?!? is a prevention-intervention project to promote and strengthen (mental) health and prevent suicidal behaviour among adolescents aged 12-18. The aim is to educate adolescents about mental health and to enable them to express their views in a safe environment, to encourage them to become aware of their own emotional experiences and thought patterns and to empower them to cope with difficult life situations.

Target groups

Schools as system - implementation of the individual activities and providing expert support schools in monitoring adolescents at increased risk of suicide, decision-making and management of the adolescent's death.

Adolescents between 12 to 18 years (in primary and secondary schools)

- Prevention workshops to identify risk factors, mental health problems and suicide risk, and to develop skills to intervene and seek help
- screening of adolescents (through questionnaires and interviews) to identify adolescents at risk of suicide and their referral to professionals or for professional help
- post-intervention activities for pupils in cases of suicide of a classmate or peer
- a competition for adolescents on mental health and help-seeking.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☒ Formal education
- ☐ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☐ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☒ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Description of Intervention

Workshop 1 – mental health

Students complete basic evaluation questionnaire (30 min) that helps identify adolescents at risk of mental health problems. Start with getting to know adolescents through introductory games, followed by short presentation of the workshop content: what is mental health, signs of mental health problems, who is likely to have mental health problems, how can we help someone, barriers to mental health.

Asking adolescents for concrete examples of mental health problems that they are familiar with, what are the signs of mental health problems – not hidden and hidden signs. Talking about who can have mental health problems – all of us. Discussion about what we can do to help a friend when

professional help is needed. Who can help and how – friends, family schools with discussions, activities that we like, socialising. Different experts (doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists) can also help. Discussion about barriers in help seeking – fear of being misunderstood, suicidal thoughts, self-reliance, shame, unavailability of support systems. Presentation and discussion on different helplines available (phone numbers, addresses) – addresses and numbers can change – important to always check the validity of details.

Workshop 2 – Stress management

Opening activity followed by short presentation of the workshop content: what is stress, triggers, and maintainers of stress, what are stress symptoms, ways of coping with stress.

Brief introduction to what stress is: asking students what stress is and then explaining stress, what are stressors, different durations of stress. Understanding how stress affect our body, mind, emotions, and behaviour through game of Activity – same as classic Activity game but with made cards that have different symptoms of stress. Students need to be divided in groups of 3 or 4 – depends on the size of the group. One adolescent in each group draws a card with the symptom of stress, the category, and the way it should be shown: by drawing/pantomime/verbal. Student can say from what category the symptom is. There is 1 minute time limit for the group to get the right answer. If the answer is correct, then the group gets 1 point. At the same time answers needs to be written on the whiteboard in 4 different categories (mind, body, behaviour, emotions). At the end of the game is time for discussion about stress symptoms. Students say in what specific situation the symptoms can occur. Asking students what stress triggers are and what is maintaining stress. Which triggers come from within us and which from environment? Even positive events can be stressful, but some level of stress is necessary and beneficial. In long term too much stress is harmful. Ways of coping with stress – foot stamping game where the students sit on chairs and stomp their feet on the floor very fast to the music. When the music is turned off, they must stop tapping immediately. Anyone who does not stop is out. Discussion about coping with stress, how we can influence internal and external factors, comparison of advantages and disadvantages of immediate versus long-term relaxation. Guided relaxation with progressive muscle relaxation or visualization. Presentation and discussion on different helplines available (phone numbers, addresses) – addresses and numbers can change – important to always check the validity of details.

Workshop 3: Coping with distress and healthy lifestyle

Opening activity for example the mood cloud where each member of group writes on paper how they feel today and stuck it on the board in the shape of the cloud. Summarization of how different people feel right now and asking students if they have ever thought about experiencing moods of others around them in this way. Short presentation of the workshop content: what are the symptoms of depression, forms of depression, association of depression with suicidal thoughts and self-harm behaviour. Brief introduction to what depression is – asking students what depression is. Summarization of answers. Depression is more than just being moody. A prolonged state of sadness, hopelessness and apathy can affect young people as well as adults and elderly. Short clips of symptoms of depression – discussion about identified symptoms in clips, and how individuals with depression feel and behave.

Symptoms of depression role play – two students leave the class with co-leader and have some time to prepare for role play (reporter and formerly depressed student). Others prepare questions that they would like to ask depressed student. At the end of the role play students are asked to identify

depression symptoms, and ask prepared questions, which are answered within the whole group. The aim of discussion is to encourage students to think about depression and symptoms (emotions, body, mind, behaviour) and what each symptom means to them. For example, what does it mean if you have poor concentration. We turn the conversation about depression into a conversation about suicidal behaviour. Suicidal behaviour in young people often stems from a desire to end an intolerable situation and not from a desire to die.

Discussion about what to do if a friend tells us about their suicidal thoughts or self-harm behaviour. Outlining forms of depression and which type of help are appropriate depending on the form of depression. Presentation and discussion on different helplines available (phone numbers, addresses) – addresses and numbers can change – important to always check the validity of details.

Talk about healthy lifestyle – encourage students to think what a healthy lifestyle and problematic unhealthy habits in young people and adults are today. Activity brick on brick: the walls – students write on brick-shaped paper what is the most important protective factor in their life (things that make them happy, mean a lot to them, contribute to their well-being). Discussion of protective factors.

Evaluation of workshops – ask students how they feel during workshops, what they found interesting, what they missed, what they would change.

Duration and timing of the program: Series of three workshops (3 x 1,5h)

Resources utilised: 2 people that present workshops, one is for support, if any of the student is in distress. Material – questionnaires, activity cards, rope, post it paper, short clips, cards with positive and negative factors of mental health, role play script.

Comparison Basis

Projekt člověk (“Project human”) is aimed at children and adolescents who are experiencing various difficulties growing up: drug and alcohol use, excessive use of modern technologies, eating disorders, self-injurious behaviour, suicidality, feelings of emptiness, aimlessness, loneliness, anxiety, depression, emotional and mood swings, lack of motivation for school, deficient or traumatic experiences, peer violence, family conflicts, acting out and maladaptive behaviour, ineffective communication and low self-esteem. The aim of the programme is to prevent the development of addiction, teach social skills and promote healthy lifestyle.

Program takes place in clinical setting in forms of individual talks, groups for children and adolescents, family meetings, weekend camps, parallel therapy for parents who can talk openly in group. Practice was excluded because it is not entirely inclusive, because it is primarily used for children and adolescents who already have some kind of problems with different addiction.

Evaluation of Outcomes

Criteria for success: Objective indicators – changes in levels of psychological well-being, decrease in levels of suicide ideation. Subjective indicators – evaluation at the end of the workshops – satisfaction with the workshops and content

Methodology used in the program for assessment: Battery of questionnaires was administered to the participating adolescents before the workshops and two months after the workshops to gain insight into changes in mental health status and potential suicide risk. Changes in situation serves as one of the objective indicators of the effectiveness of the problem.

Evaluation at the end of workshops – aspects that were mostly rated as good were: interactivity of the workshops, comprehensibility of the content, interestingness of the workshops, everyday applicability of the skills and knowledge acquired, opportunity to engage in conversation, opportunity to express their own opinions, interest in participating in such workshops again and the relevance of such activities for the pupils or students. Slightly lower level was rated for aspect “fun” which is no surprise to serious of

Challenges encountered and how they were addressed: Great need for implementation of programme in schools and the difficulty of providing experts – that was addressed with the help of psychology students.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

This program can be adapted as it has a very elaborate structure and content, which is implemented and evaluated by experts in the field.

Implementation as a mandatory program in schools (primary and secondary schools)

Resources required for implementation: Setting up a dialog with policy makers. The Council of Experts of the Republic of Slovenia for General Education is responsible for deciding on professional matters in the field of general education.

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and regeneration
- ☒ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behaviour
- ☐ Addictive behaviour
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☒ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☐ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

Additional Information and Conclusions

Schools primarily play a key role in addressing mental health care and suicide prevention for adolescents in the school environment. “A (se) štekaš?!?” programme and other programmes only complement this basic role of the school, and the need for them is increasing due to several factors and changes in the functioning of modern society.

<https://www.hippocampus.si/ISBN/978-961-293-163-6.pdf> Contact information for further inquiries: stekas@iam.upr.si

To sem jaz (“This is me”)

The National Institute of Public Health (NIJZ) in Celje

Slovenia

Main goals

“To sem jaz” is a mental health programme developed by the regional Institute of Public Health in Celje, Slovenia. Since its establishment in 2001, the programme was directed at strengthening mental health in adolescents, the development of positive and realistic self-esteem, social and communication skills and other life competencies to support adolescents in their everyday lives. The programme employs two distinct approaches; firstly, it is centred on an online counselling service, where Slovenian adolescents have access to professional help. Secondly, it focuses on the school environment through organized training for teachers and prevention workshops based on the concept of 10 Steps to a Better Self-Esteem. As of 2013, the programme is ready to be adopted into the school system.

Target groups

The objectives of To sem jaz were the implementation of continuous web counselling service aimed at adolescents (other target groups are not excluded) the implementation of the prevention workshops programme in schools, aimed at adolescents aged 13 to 17 (primary and secondary schools).

Description of Intervention

The mental health programme for young people, „To sem jaz“, aims to strengthen young people's mental health and resilience - to develop the social and emotional skills and competences that support young people as they grow up and act as protection in crisis situations. One strand of the programme is linked to preventive work with young people through workshops delivered by mentors (teachers - school counsellors or class teachers). The second strand is linked to an online counselling service, where a network of professionals (doctors of various specialties, psychologists, social pedagogues and other experts) is set up to advise young people on their problems.

1. Preventive work with adolescents Maturing through „To sem jaz”

Prevention workshops for adolescents

In the area of prevention work in the school environment, the programme is based on a working model of 10 prevention workshops. The concept and the prevention workshops were developed by psychologist Alenka Tacol. The integrated model of 10 prevention workshops systematically addresses the development of social and emotional competences and realistic self-esteem.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☒ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☒ Other, specify: Online

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☒ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

These are workshops that address fundamental areas of adolescents' lives. The programme is included in the National Programme for Mental Health 2018-2028 and is planned for a gradual systemic introduction in the school environment.

The aim of the integrated model is for the provider to deliver all 10 workshops in the same classroom over the course of a school year or two. They focus on encouraging adolescents to take an active role in setting goals, taking responsibility, solving problems, working with others, coping with stress and strengthening other life skills. The workshops are delivered by teachers (most often class teachers). The programme links to the purpose of the school curriculum, in particular in by complementing the process with a clear and structured concept of 10 prevention workshops the process of building a healthy personality in children and adolescents. This is one of the reasons why the creators of the programme have good reason to hope that the programme will be implemented in a school context. In each workshop, the teacher is given a theoretical framework, an explanation that can be used to feel more confident in their discussions with students and in their role as workshop facilitator. Working in workshops is certainly different from classroom teaching, but the workshops are designed in such a way that the delivery is simple. Class teachers, i.e. teachers with different professional profiles, are able to use the continuous over two years, they teach their pupils social and emotional skills, thereby strengthening their self-esteem, influence their interpersonal relationships, improve classroom climate and etc. A teacher is always also a role model for his/her pupils, a model for appropriate behaviour. In addressing certain problems in life, the adolescents can rely on his or her personality maturity, his experience, if he is willing to share it with them. It is important to make the delivery of the workshops meaningful to the students. They are much more likely to participate if they see meaning in the content and the format of the work presented. The teacher can base the selection and order of workshops on the needs of the students, but above all, he/she should give reasons, how they and their later lives will benefit from learning certain social skills and emotional skills and to strengthen their self-esteem.

The Slovenian Institute of Education recommends that all teachers and schools, especially guidance counsellors and class teachers, use the handbook, which should be seen as a foundation for emotional and social literacy for pupils. The expanded and updated manual for preventive work with adolescents, *Maturing through To sem jaz* - published in June 2019 - is free and publicly available for educational professionals (the manual is located in the "Supporting documents" section). The manual provides an overview of the theoretical background on mental health, social and emotional learning and contemporary views on self-esteem, but above all it contains practical guidelines and clear instructions for implementing the workshops. The instructions for the workshops are written in such a way as to encourage teachers to implement them, even if they do not have much experience of such activities.

Prevention workshops tailored for online delivery

In the context of the health crisis caused by the Covid-19 epidemic, which has had a major impact on the functioning of schools in 2020-2022, a selection of three prevention workshops adapted for remote delivery has been developed. The selected workshops address the areas of positive life attitudes, goal setting and achievement, self-esteem and self-acceptance. All three areas form important building blocks of mental health. Teachers' materials can be found in the 'Supporting documents' section.

Handbook for adolescents

School counsellors and class teachers can guide adolescents aged 15 and over in the use of the

guide "What can I do to make it easier for myself". The guide is publicly available and can be found in the "Supporting documents" section. The manual has been peer-reviewed by Dr Peter Janjušević, a specialist in clinical psychology and cognitive behavioural therapist, an expert from the Ljubljana Counselling Centre for Children, Adolescents and Parents. The manual has also been recommended by the Slovenian Institute of Education.

The Association of School Counsellors of Slovenia has also prepared Recommendations for familiarisation with the contents of the manual "What can I do to make it easier for me?" and for use in educational contexts, which are publicly available.

2. "To sem jaz" online counselling service

The online counselling service www.tosemjaz.net gives young people anonymous, public, free, quick and easy access to expert advice.

To sem jaz - ask

At www.tosemjaz.net, young people can ask their questions anonymously and free of charge at any time and receive an answer tailored to them. Answers to questions about the dilemmas and difficulties of growing up are provided by a multidisciplinary and inter-institutional online counselling network of around 90 volunteer experts (doctors of various specialties, psychologists, social workers and other professionals).

To sem jaz - explore

Adolescents can also explore among the topics already written down by their peers and existing answers from professionals. The website also offers interesting and informative articles written by experts.

To sem jaz - talk to an expert

For adolescents who need to talk to a professional. Each month, they publish a timetable for the online counselling service, where young people can check when a professional is available to talk to about their problem.

eMonthly #Tosemjaz

The e-Monthly #Tosemjaz is published regularly as part of the National Institute of Public Health's pre-vention programme To sem jaz. It is aimed at adolescents. Each issue is thematic and highlights topics that young people can benefit from while growing up. Subscribers receive the e-Monthly at their email address.

Duration and timing of the program: from 2001 onwards Resources utilised: Financial resources

- The programme is run by the National Institute of Public Health, with support from the Ministry of Health.
- Involvement in the COVID-19 Control Measures with a Focus on Vulnerable Populations 2020-2023 project:

The project has created four new online sections on the To sem jaz website in 2021: Anxiety, Sadness and Depression, Behind the Wheel of My Anger and Learning, as well as worksheets and audio clips that are part of these sections. The project has also produced an integrated plan for the redesign of the website in 2021. The regular maintenance of the To sem jaz website has been funded under the project title until the end of September 2023.

- Integration into the MIRA National Mental Health Programme:

Within the National Mental Health Programme 2018-2028, the MIRA Programme, a comprehensive re- design of the #Tosemjaz website was created - the redesigned website was launched on 1 March 2022. The MIRA Programme is the National Mental Health Programme, which is the first strategic document in the Republic of Slovenia to comprehensively address and regulate the field of mental health. It integrates existing and adds new programmes, services and structures to respond to people's mental health needs.

Human resources:

- Experts from different fields (doctors of different specialities, psychologists, social workers and other professionals) to provide online counselling service. All online counselling professionals are volunteers.
- Employees involved in the This is Me programme (for online platform This is me).
- Mentors (workshop providers): school counsellors and class teachers.
- Practical support for the workshop providers: Training of teachers to implement the workshops in the classroom.
- Support from school management: management is aware of the programme and facilitates its operation.

Material resources:

- Manuals for workshop facilitators, young people, teachers and the general public.
- Promotional materials.
- Evaluation reports.

Comparison Basis

We used Programme "Ko učenca strese stress" („When a pupil is stressed by stress") for comparison. Both programmes (To sem jaz and Ko učenca strese stress) were developed by the National Institute of Public Health.

The aim of the "Ko učenca strese stress" programme is to improve students' knowledge of stress and coping, and to reduce the negative effects of stress by learning effective coping strategies, thereby improving the individual's mental health. The programme is also delivered by teachers (like To sem jaz programme), who can do this as part of their regular work, as the content of the programme can be integrated into the learning process in the context of lessons and other activities. The transfer of the necessary information, knowledge and skills to teachers was done through the Educator Education method, whereby experts in a specific field educate a small group of people, who then return to their work environment. The To sem jaz programme also trains teachers to deliver workshops in the classroom.

The initiative was excluded because the results of the evaluation of the short-term effects of Ko učenca strese stress show that there were no significant changes in students' stress sensitivity, frequency of use of coping strategies and frequency of physical symptoms of stress during the programme. Compared to the To sem jaz programme, the programme is narrower in content and time. Therefore, it does not cover such a wide range of topics and it is also delivered in fewer hours compared to the To sem jaz programme. In the case of Ko učenca strese stress, the implementation plans or the content of the programme varied from school to school and were therefore not

uniform. However, the content of the To sem jaz programme is clear and detailed. The This is Me programme also includes an online counselling service where adolescents can go for help to resolve their personal difficulties and, in turn, be assisted by a trained professional. This seemed to us to be the most important criterion for deciding on the This is Me programme.

Evaluation of Outcomes

Evaluation of a model of prevention workshops for adolescents: The integrated model of 10 prevention workshops systematically addresses the development of social and emotional competences and realistic self-esteem. The research project (carried out with the financial support of the Ministry of Health) was motivated primarily by the intention to finally have a validated model for prevention work with the classroom in the school setting. To this end, an in-depth evaluation of the effectiveness of the To sem jaz workshops, aimed at preventive work with adolescents aged 13 to 17, was carried out in the 2017/2018 school year by the Centre for Psycho-diagnostic Resources. It was aimed at measuring the impact and effects of prevention workshops on the individual and the class.

Evaluation of the online adolescent counselling service www.tosemjaz.net: The online meetings reveal material about Slovenian youth through the analysis of the records of adolescents in the online advisory service www.tosemjaz.net. They wanted to gain insight into the needs, feelings, longings and thoughts of adolescents. The aim was to create guidelines for online counselling.

Methodology used in the program for assessment: Evaluation of a model of prevention workshops for adolescents - Both qualitative and quantitative methods (validated questionnaires, surveys, process observation and recording) were used.

The analysis involved 10 primary schools, 13 workshop providers, 64 teachers, 425 8th graders and 68 3rd graders.

The impact of the workshops was measured using a variety of measurement tools and techniques. Students, teachers (who taught in both the workshop and control classes) and mentors (workshop providers) actively participated in the study.

The following questionnaires and methods were used:

- *The Classroom Environment Questionnaire* (Zabukovec, 1988), which measured the classroom climate as perceived by students and teachers.
- *The Interpersonal Problems in Adolescence Questionnaire* (Ingles et al., 2008), which measured adolescents' perceptions of problems in interpersonal relationships.
- *The Adolescent Coping Questionnaire* (Frydenberg, Lewis, Košťál, & Drum, 2001), which measured the coping styles or coping strategies used by adolescents.
- *The Self-Esteem Questionnaire* (Musita et al., 2012), which measured how adolescents perceived themselves in their home environment, interpersonal relationships, physical appearance, perceptions of their emotions and school performance.
- *A questionnaire on satisfaction with the workshops*, which the students completed on an ongoing basis after each workshop.
- *Mentor's diary and his/her ratings of satisfaction with the workshops*, designed to provide

qualitative data for analysing changes in the classroom.

The evaluation took place over a period of 10 months, from the beginning to the end of the school year 2017/18. The measurements were taken three times: before the start of the workshops (pre-workshop situation), after the fifth workshop (mid-way through the programme) and after the tenth workshop (after the completion of all the workshops in the 10 Steps to a Better Self-Esteem concept).

Evaluation of the online adolescent counselling service www.tosemjaz.si: They have set up a monitoring and research system that allows them to systematically and closely monitor young people's messages in order to better understand them. They have introduced a consistent *coding of the questions received* - sorting questions according to the typology of the demand or problem.

In a large-scale study, the authors *analysed 6,000 online questions* from young people who sought advice or an expert's opinion on growing-up dilemmas in 2012 and 2013 on the online counselling service www.tosemjaz.net. So they tracked what adolescents and young women said about themselves *through their writings*.

Key findings and impacts on target group: Evaluation of a model of prevention workshops for adolescents. The measurements taken at the mid-point of the programme - i.e. after the fifth workshop - did not demonstrate the desired effects of the prevention workshops, which would support the conclusion that a series of five prevention workshops is sufficient to bring about positive changes, at least in the area of classroom climate.

The latter is an important finding, as it confirms the original programme theory and the long-standing guideline that *the full concept of 10 prevention workshops is reasonable and effective*.

The results of the survey after a full implementation of the whole concept - i.e. after the 10 prevention workshops:

1. *Mentors (workshop providers):*

Mentors were very satisfied with the workshops. They perceived a *better classroom atmosphere* at the end of the programme. They note that *the relationship between the pupils and the mentors has improved*, which is reflected in mutual trust and joint problem solving, especially where the mentor was a class teacher. They state that *they know the pupils better*, which allows them to have a more trusting relationship and to be more connected.

2. *Teachers:*

Teachers who taught a class in which the mentor regularly conducted prevention workshops reported that *the classroom climate improved* from the beginning to the end of the programme.

3. *Pupils (eighth graders):*

- The workshops were (on average) *extremely well received by the pupils*. They liked the collaboration, the exchange of views with their classmates and the teacher and the opportunity to express their opinions.
- At the end of the programme, pupils perceived an *improvement in the classroom climate*, while students who did not participate in the workshops rated classroom interpersonal relations, order, rules and organisation as getting worse the closer the school year came to the end.
- When measuring interpersonal problems, it is evident that pupils who participated in the

workshops had fewer problems after the end of the programme than students who did not participate in the work- shops. They reported *fewer problems in interpersonal relationships with friends, at home, with the opposite sex, in public speaking or with assertiveness*. When measuring coping styles and strategies, it is evident that *pupils used a wider variety of coping strategies* (both effective and ineffective) after the programme.

- In the area of *self-esteem*, there were *small positive changes* in the workshop group and smaller negative changes in the non-workshop group. The biggest differences between the two groups were in physical self-esteem, especially for boys.

4. Pupils - pilot implementation (third graders):

After the three workshops, there were shifts in improved interpersonal relationships, rule-following and class organisation. According to the evaluation of the pilot, the work with adapted workshops for younger pupils could be started at a younger age, e.g. in 3rd grade.

The results of the research show that *the workshops have a positive impact on both the class and the individual in terms of enhancing mental health and developing social and emotional skills*.

Evaluation of the online adolescent counselling service www.tosemjaz.si

The evaluation of the online counselling service has resulted in a monography, which is a unique online documentation of the life of Slovenian youth. The coming-of-age stories give an insight into the needs, feelings, longings and thoughts of growing up. The book is also distinctive in its focus on creating guide- lines for online counselling. The experiential practice of the online counselling service To sem jaz and the extensive research work highlight the perspectives of preventive, informative and counselling work with young people online. We will not write the findings here, as they are more extensive than the present template for good practices foresees. The monograph is publicly available in the "Supporting documents" section.

Challenges encountered and how they were addressed: The scope of prevention workshops implementation in Slovenia currently depends on voluntary attitudes of individuals or schools – *the programme is not systemically situated in school work*. For many years, educators have reported *difficulties in coordinating workshops with the fixed school curriculum*, often resulting in a lack of time to run them. Therefore, a systematic integration of the programme into school work, which would allow for a more systematic implementation of the integrated concept of prevention workshops, could make a significant contribution to improving the organised mental health care of adolescents in Slovenian schools. This was the goal they had in mind when they approached a systematic, comprehensive evaluation of the programme with the Centre for Psychodiagnostic

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs

☒ Personal education, knowledge

☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)

☒ Stress management and re-generation

☐ Exercise/physical activity

☐ Nutritional behavior

☐ Addictive behavior

☐ Other

Social & community networks

☒ Social support structures / services

☒ Personal social networks

☐ Empowerment/participation

☐ Networking of professional actors

☐ Other

Resources. They reasoned that the programme would have a more realistic chance of being implemented in a school context if it was validated and supported by evidence. In the evaluation of the programme it was concluded that it would make sense to integrate workshops into class lessons (slo. razredna ura).

Teachers who run the workshops are trained in advance to run them. However, the evaluation of the programme found that additional training for class teachers would be useful.

Data show that *many adolescents are not familiar with the largest online youth counselling service in Slovenia* and that every generation needs information about the available sources of help while growing up. So, there was a challenge about the *promotion of the program*. The challenge was addressed by preparing the promotional materials for schools and teachers to use in schools to inform young people. Also, when the Slovenian Year of Mental Health, the Ministry of Education and Science supported the national Institute of Public Health's proposal to give a copy of the handbook to every ninth-grader in the 2023/24 school year.

The next challenge is about the online counselling service. Online counsellors stated that the *inability to check the adolescent's acceptance of the answer leaves them in a state of uncertainty*. They are also *unable to check how their perception of the answer has been used by the young person* (if they have read it at all). Through the online meetings, some counsellors said that they alleviate the burden of non-responsiveness in the following way: "I help myself by asking follow-up questions and inviting them to contact me or to seek help in person."

(Up)Scalability and allocation

The adaptation of the practice: This programme can be adapted as it has a very elaborate structure and content, which is implemented and evaluated by experts in the field. There are many experts involved in the dialogue within the programme, which means that any change or adaptation would go through expert scrutiny.

Scalability to a different level: Implementation as a mandatory program in all primary/secondary schools.

This would be possible, and steps are already being made to pursue this objective, but it requires a lot of time, resources and involvement of expert councils and national authorities.

Resources required for implementation: Setting up a dialog with policy makers. The Council of Experts of the Republic of Slovenia for General Education is responsible for deciding on professional matters in the field of general education.

Recommendation for adaptation in other settings: The programme could be adaptable so it can be used also in schools with adapted programmes (e.g. schools with lower educational standards). The programme could be adapted not only for the school environment but also for implementation in youth workshops within various youth organisations. Also it could include handbooks for parents – how to help your child when experiencing distress.

Additional Information and Conclusions

The "To sem jaz" initiative is a comprehensive program designed to enhance resilience and mental well-being among youth.

One way in which the program promotes this is through the model of 10 preventive workshops in primary and secondary schools. The working model is field-tested, peer-reviewed and evidence-based. The workshops focus on developing core resilience skills, such as emotional regulation, problem-solving, and stress management. These skills help students handle adversity more effectively, promoting overall mental well-being.

The "To sem saz" initiative significantly contributes to resilience development in youth also by providing a comprehensive online platform for mental health support. It offers resources such as expert advice, peer stories, and practical guides to manage stress, emotions, and daily challenges. The platform encourages youth to seek help, promotes mental well-being through educational articles, and fosters a supportive community. Overall, it empowers young people with knowledge and tools to enhance their mental resilience and navigate life's difficulties effectively.

Supporting documents:

https://www.tosemjaz.net/assets/Prirocniki/tsj_prirocnik_e_objava_koncna_27_6_2019.pdf

https://www.tosemjaz.net/assets/Prirocniki/priporocila_e_delavnice_to_sem_jaz.pdf

<https://live.editiondigital.com/e/221cpgqsc/prirocnik-kaj-lahko-naredim-da-mi-bo-lazje#!page1>

https://www.tosemjaz.net/assets/Priporocila_prirocnik_prva_izdaja_koncna.pdf

https://www.tosemjaz.net/assets/Prirocniki/Srecanja_na_spletu.pdf

https://nijz.si/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/evalvacija_programa_ko_ucenca_strese_stres_2017_zadnja.pdf

https://health.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2017-11/2017_mh_work_schools_en_0.pdf Contact

information for further inquiries: tosemjaz@nijz.si

Nacionalna mreža TOM (telefon za otroke in mladostnike) ("National Network TOM (telephone helpline for children and adolescents")

The Friends of Youth Association of Slovenia

Slovenia

Main goals

TOM is helpline for children and adolescents, founded in 1990 and five years later a national network of around 200 trained counsellors was established. The programme was created primarily as an emotional support for children and young people who face various questions, dilemmas or difficulties in the process of growing up. It is a publicly verified social protection programme, verified by the Social Chamber of Slovenia. TOM encourages courage and empowers children and young people to find solutions.

The objectives of the counseling program are: to provide possibility for a confidential and anonymous conversation about problems, hardships, including issues related to the use of the internet and mobile devices for young people on a daily basis; to provide counseling for young people with regard to the principle of equal access for all users; provide free service; care for the united and high quality work of consultants (training); promote volunteering among young people; increase the visibility of the programme among young people; active involvement of young people in programme activities.

In order to ensure the overall personal and social development of children and adolescents, the programme is linked to other similar projects and programmes that can provide them with direct support.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☐ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☒ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Target groups

TOM Telefon, is aimed at all young people (children and adolescents) and their parents who have any problems and want to discuss them.

Description of Intervention

TOM Phone (helpline):

TOM is a dedicated helpline for children and young people, providing a free and confidential telephone service where they can share their problems, seek advice, and obtain further information from trained counselors. The helpline is supported by around 200 volunteers, who form a robust network of nine counseling groups spread across major Slovenian cities. These

counselors have extensive experience in guiding young people through various situations and are specially trained to address issues related to internet use, mobile phones, and other new technologies.

The TOM counselors offer a compassionate ear, empower young individuals, provide crucial information, and work collaboratively to find effective solutions. By fostering a supportive environment, TOM helps children transition from feelings of helplessness to a state of calmness, enabling them to utilize their own resources and develop a more realistic view of their situations. The counselors also create tailored plans to facilitate positive changes in the lives of these young individuals. Depending on the nature of the problem, the counselors may refer children to appropriate professional services such as personal doctors, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Centers, Crisis Centers, the police, school counseling services, and various NGOs.

Anonymity and confidentiality are fundamental principles of the TOM service, ensuring that young people feel safe and secure while seeking help. This confidentiality encourages the development of self-confidence, communication skills, and the ability to handle conflict situations independently.

Moreover, TOM includes an intergenerational component, catering not only to children and adolescents but also to their parents and relatives. The program provides valuable information to parents about the challenges and issues faced by young people, fostering a supportive family environment.

TOM offers three primary advice channels: telephone, web chat, and email. The telephone service is available daily, including Sundays and public holidays, from 12:00 to 20:00. The web chat service provides support according to a specific schedule, usually two days a week for two hours each day. Additionally, young people can email TOM using a designated template and can expect a response within seven days. Through these multiple channels, TOM ensures accessible and continuous support for young people and their families.

It is crucial for children and young people to have a safe space where they can talk and express their concerns. The TOM phone often serves as the first step for children and adolescents seeking help because it is anonymous, easily accessible, and free. The anonymity of the TOM phone makes it a valuable resource for those who might otherwise be suspicious, scared, or feel they have nowhere else to turn. Unfortunately, parents are not always the first choice of confidant for many children and young people due to a family history of misunderstandings, poor relationships, or feelings of neglect.

Even in families with good relationships, children and adolescents might feel too guilty or ashamed to confide in a parent or other close adult. They may need encouragement, information, and relief from guilt before they can take the step of trusting someone with their problems. The TOM phone provides a safe, non-judgmental environment where young people can freely explore and confide their concerns, gaining understanding and support without fear of repercussions.

eTOM website:

As part of the campaign "New Number, Old Friends," the existing website www.e-tom.si has been thoroughly renovated to better serve children and adolescents. The updated website offers a wealth of information on a wide variety of topics that are relevant to young people, including school, drugs, family, love, adolescence, violence, psychological issues, and sexuality. These areas are specifically derived from the issues frequently raised by young people on the TOM phone and

during the TOM Travels campaign.

The website not only provides valuable insights and resources on these critical topics but also hosts the web chat channel, offering an additional platform for young people to seek advice and support. The web chat is designed to be easily accessible, ensuring that children and adolescents can reach out for help in a format that is comfortable and convenient for them.

Through this comprehensive renovation, the www.e-tom.si website now stands as a robust resource hub, addressing the diverse needs and concerns of young people, and enhancing the overall support network available to them.

Campaign TOM potuje, otroke obiskuje (TOM travels, visits children):

Once a year, the TOM Phone Backpack travels to primary schools across all 12 Slovenian regions. For instance, in 2022, the TOM Backpack visited 193 schools, and in 2023/24, it reached 167 schools. Each school hosts the TOM Backpack for a week or two, during which time a workshop on the TOM phone and the importance of conversation is held in all classes from 4th to 9th grade. The backpack contains all the necessary materials and instructions for the workshop, as well as a "memory book." A special corner is set up in each school during the campaign, where the TOM Backpack is kept.

During the classroom sessions, teachers introduce students to the importance of talking and present the TOM phone as a vital resource for help when they are in distress, have a question, or need to talk. The aim is to remind children and young people that talking can help them feel better, relax, calm down, and realize they are not alone in their distress. Discussing their problems often makes these issues appear smaller and more manageable, transforming seemingly unsolvable problems into solvable ones. It becomes much quicker and easier to find solutions, gain clarity on beneficial actions, and understand how to care for themselves in difficult situations. No topic is too big or too small to be discussed.

Part of the workshop encourages students to think about issues or topics they cannot, dare not, or do not want to discuss with their parents or other adults. In the 2023/24 campaign, students wrote their thoughts, fears, concerns, questions, or themes on pieces of paper and anonymously placed them in a box. In this way more than 10,300 notes were received, reviewed, and statistically analyzed, providing valuable insight into the world of children once again.

Duration and timing of the program: TOM phone - open every day, including Sundays and public holidays, between 12:00 and 20:00 on the free number. Users can always send an email to the TOMs mail using specific template and receive reply within 7 days. eTOM website - all the time, web chat is offering support according to the specific schedule, usually 2 days a week, 2 hours per day. TOM Travels campaign - Couple of months, workshop for individual class – 1 hour.

Resources utilised: Human - staff to implement the programme, volunteers for counselling.

Material-telephones, premises for the phone counselling, website, backpack with materials to deliver TOM Travels workshop.

Financial-the operation of the TOM national network, a public social security programme from the Children and Youth Programme Group, is funded by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities for a multiannual period.

Comparison Basis

We used Telefon PRISLUHNEM TI "I listen to you Phone" (helpline) for comparison. The "I listen to you" emotional distress phone is a project of the Psychological Counselling Centre of Sigmund

Freud University, Vienna, branch in Ljubljana. It is aimed at children, adolescents, students, adults and the elderly. All participating counsellors are trained for this type of volunteering. They are involved in a regular process of supervision by psychologists and psychotherapists, which allows to develop professionally and personally, and to decompress from certain subjects.

We did not include the initiative among the three selected good practices because it targets a broader audience (anyone with a mental distress) rather than focusing specifically on young people. Additionally, it lacks other supportive activities such as e-counseling (chat), a website featuring relevant topics for users to read, workshops, or similar events.

Evaluation of Outcomes

Criteria for success:

- satisfaction with the counselling
- emotional relief
- accessibility of the programme
- volunteer/adviser qualifications
- visibility of the programme among the target audience
- visibility of the programme among the professional public
- informing the user (young person) about possible forms of assistance

Methodology used in the program for assessment: The program was evaluated by Slovenian Social Protection Institute (SPI) in 2017 – it was a formative evaluation, which aimed to highlight any shortcomings in the functioning of the programme and make recommendations to improve it. For evaluation of social protection programmes the SPI developed a special model that is based on Yates CPPOA evaluation model.

Different measurement instruments (questionnaires) are used to measure the quality of the delivery to users: one at entry to programme (entry questionnaire), the other at exit / the end of the evaluation period (exit questionnaire). A programme data booklet - a form in which programme providers fill in key information about the programme - has also been developed specifically for the evaluation.

Evaluation criteria:

- Relevance of objectives
- Programme performance
- Programme effectiveness
- Risk assessment for the implementation of the programme
- An assessment of the sustainability of the programme

Evaluation results and resulting proposals are intended to provide clear picture of the state of play in terms of achievement of programme objectives and potential risks in implementation. They enable programme implementers and funders to address any shortcomings identified and to redesign the way(s) of working to better achieve objectives identified as being less well achieved, and to ensure that programme is adequately resourced for implementation.

Key findings and impacts on target group: The most common themes that were constant until 2020 (love, physical development and sexuality, peers) have taken a back seat during the epidemic. Mental health-related distress (panic attacks, insomnia, anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicidal thoughts) and family relationships have come to the fore. Suicidal thinking is the biggest growth

trend among the content received on TOM. The chat room and email are counselling channels where extremely difficult topics related to children and adolescents' mental health predominate. According to the evaluation results, more than half (61.7 %) of the users were satisfied with the service, and 68,0 % felt emotionally relieved (2017).

Challenges encountered and how they were addressed: Conflicts between employees on the methods to be used: during the period under review, the biggest challenge for consultants was dealing with test calls. These calls are typical of children's telephones all over the world, but in recent years there has been an increase in the number of vulgar and aggressive calls, which have become increasingly burdensome for the counsellors (despite the fact that they have received training in these types of calls as part of their basic training), and some of them have even decided to stop volunteering. The programme provider has therefore organised additional training and supervision sessions on this topic and is also looking into possible technical solutions to limit these types of calls. Currently, there is a disagreement among the operators as to the preferred way of dealing with the issue (some see the advantages and solution in technology, others in education). Administrative and organisational barriers: e-consultation has been increasingly used as a sub-programme of SOS Telephone in recent years. This is understandable given the target population and communication trends in society as a whole. However, e-consultation requires more time to formulate a response, coordination between counsellors, new technical solutions (e.g. updating websites, chat room applications, etc.), which are not taken into account in the current implementation. In developing the norms, it is estimated that the expansion of e-counselling would require an expert manager/employee specifically for the e-counselling sub-programme.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

This practice can be adapted as it has a very elaborate structure and content, which is implemented and evaluated by experts in the field. Resources are required for implementation: Telephone line, website, competent staff, trained volunteers, and finances.

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☒ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☒ Stress management and re-generation
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☒ Nutritional behaviour
- ☒ Addictive behaviour
- ☐ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☒ Personal social networks
- ☒ Empowerment/participation
- ☐ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

Additional Information and Conclusions

In the period of puberty, young people seek their place in the society that requires them to grow up. The search for an identity, peer pressure, lack of experience and emotional immaturity often lead to insecurity, tension and new questions. In these and similar situations, the TOM Telephone offers emotional support and the possibility of a confidential, anonymous conversation with a trained counsellor on the topics that are most relevant to young people (school, love, sexuality, drugs, body,

friends, family, emotions, violence...). At the same time, the programme also provides information on where to go for different forms of help and gives answers and tips for safe use of the internet. The programme follows the fast-changing modern technological and fashion trends in the use of information technology and other areas (leisure time, knowledge of slang to facilitate communication, supply and use of psychoactive substances) among young people. The programme also has an intergenerational component: the users of the programme are not only children and adolescents, but also their relatives (parents), to whom the programme provides information related to young people's lives, especially in relation to the safe use and control of information technologies (the web, mobile technologies).

Supporting documents:

chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/ https://irssv.si/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/ZPMS_Nacionalna-mreza-Tom_2017.pdf

<https://e-tom.si/>

Ukraine

Mental Help – PACT

Main goals

The main goals of the Mental Help initiative are to provide free professional psychological support to Ukrainians, especially during challenging times. The platform allows users to easily find and book sessions with therapists, ensuring accessibility, convenience, and confidentiality for all its services.

Target groups

The Mental Help initiative primarily targets Ukrainians who require psychological support, especially during challenging times. This includes individuals affected by socio-political unrest, those experiencing trauma or stress, and people with limited access to mental health resources due to geographic or financial constraints. The platform aims to serve a broad demographic, ensuring that mental health services are accessible to all, regardless of age, gender, or socio-economic status. By offering free, professional therapy, it seeks to alleviate the psychological burden on diverse segments of the population.

Description of Intervention

Mental Help collaborates with therapists from various backgrounds and specializations, including cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), psychoanalysis, existential therapy, and more. This diversity ensures that users can find a therapist whose expertise aligns with their specific needs. For example:

- **CBT Specialists:** Focus on identifying and altering negative thought patterns and behaviours.
- **Psychoanalysts:** Explore unconscious motivations and early life experiences.
- **Existential Therapists:** Address issues related to meaning, choice, and existential anxiety.
- **User Preferences** Users can filter therapists based on specific criteria such as specialization, therapeutic approach, and even language spoken. This personalized matching process increases the likelihood of successful therapeutic outcomes.

Booking Process

Ease of Access The platform's booking system is designed to be user-friendly, allowing users to schedule appointments with minimal effort. This involves:

- **Online Scheduling:** Users can view available time slots and book sessions directly through the platform.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☐ Non-formal education
- ☒ Healthcare
- ☐ Social services
- ☐ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☐ national
- ☐ regional
- ☒ county-level
- ☐ municipal

- **Flexibility:** Sessions can be scheduled at various times to accommodate different schedules, which is particularly beneficial for those with irregular working hours or residing in remote areas.

Technical Support The platform provides technical support to assist users with any issues they might encounter during the booking process or while accessing their therapy sessions. This includes help with account creation, session booking, and troubleshooting technical problems during online sessions.

Free Services

Accessibility One of the most significant aspects of Mental Help is that all services are provided free of charge. This is crucial in ensuring that financial constraints do not prevent individuals from seeking the help they need. Free access to therapy can reduce the stigma associated with seeking help and encourage more people to prioritize their mental health.

Funding and Support The platform is likely supported by a combination of governmental funding, non-profit organizations, and private donations. These funds are allocated to cover the operational costs of the platform, as well as compensate the therapists who provide their services.

Confidentiality

Privacy Policies Mental Help prioritizes user confidentiality and adheres to strict privacy policies. This includes secure data storage and compliance with relevant regulations to protect user information. All communication between users and therapists is encrypted to prevent unauthorized access.

Anonymous Sessions For those who may feel uncomfortable sharing their personal information, the platform offers the option of anonymous sessions. Users can seek help without revealing their identity, which can be especially important for individuals dealing with sensitive issues.

Outreach and Awareness

Public Campaigns To ensure that those in need are aware of the services offered, Mental Help conducts public awareness campaigns. These campaigns utilize various media channels, including social media, traditional media, and community outreach programs to reach a broad audience.

Collaborations The platform collaborates with other mental health organizations, schools, workplaces, and community centers to spread the word about available services. These partnerships help integrate mental health support into various aspects of everyday life.

Technological Integration

User Interface and Experience The platform's interface is designed to be intuitive and accessible, with a focus on ease of navigation. Features include:

- **Mobile Compatibility:** Ensuring that the platform is accessible from smartphones and tablets.
- **Multilingual Support:** Providing services in multiple languages to cater to a diverse user base.
- **Teletherapy** Given the rise of telehealth, Mental Help leverages video conferencing technology to conduct therapy sessions. This is particularly beneficial for those in rural or conflict-affected areas where in-person visits might not be feasible.

Feedback and Improvement

User Feedback Mental Help actively solicits feedback from its users to improve the platform and services continually. Users can rate their therapists, provide comments on their experiences, and suggest improvements.

Regular Assessments The platform conducts regular assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of its services. This involves analyzing user feedback, therapist performance, and overall user satisfaction. Based on these assessments, adjustments are made to enhance service quality.

Training and Development

Therapist Training Mental Help provides ongoing training and professional development opportunities

Cultural Sensitivity: Training on providing culturally appropriate care, which is especially important in a diverse society.

Crisis Intervention: Preparing therapists to handle acute mental health crises effectively.

Resource Development The platform also develops and provides resources such as articles, self-help tools, and informational videos to users. These resources can help individuals manage their mental health between sessions and provide additional support.

Community Building

Support Groups In addition to one-on-one therapy, Mental Help offers virtual support groups. These groups allow individuals with similar experiences to connect, share, and support each other in a safe environment. Support groups can be centered around specific issues such as grief, anxiety, or PTSD.

Workshops and Webinars The platform organizes workshops and webinars on various mental health topics. These educational events aim to raise awareness, provide coping strategies, and teach self-care techniques. They are often led by experienced therapists and are available to all users.

Conclusion

Mental Help is a comprehensive platform designed to provide free, professional psychological support to Ukrainians. By offering a range of specialized therapists, an easy booking process, free services, and a strong emphasis on confidentiality, the platform ensures that mental health care is accessible to everyone. Through ongoing outreach, technological integration, and a commitment to continuous improvement, Mental Help stands as a crucial resource in promoting mental well-being in Ukraine.

Comparison Basis

Braincult Mental Health Center and the Society Foundation have created a platform for psychological support in times of crisis called "Resilience Hub".

There you can find advice on psychological self-help, as well as make an appointment with a specific psychologist or psychotherapist from the contact database.

In addition, the website contains information about Ukrainian and foreign therapeutic communities, Telegram bots and services. <https://resiliencehub.com.ua/about-us>

Evaluation of Outcomes

Criteria for success (Evaluation): Improved psychological state of a person.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

Free psychological assistance can be well adapted and scaled up through closer cooperation with communities and non-profit organisations. This allows for a broader reach and access to free psychological services for a wider audience. Partnerships with local communities and organisations can help to leverage additional resources and support

What resources are required for implementation?

financial, human, material

Recommendations for Adaptation in Other Settings

1. **Resource Allocation:** Ensure adequate funding and resources to maintain a robust network of qualified therapists. This can be achieved through partnerships with governmental bodies, non-profits, and private donors.
2. **Technological Infrastructure:** Invest in reliable, user-friendly technology to facilitate smooth online therapy sessions. This includes a stable platform, tech support, and user training for both clients and therapists.
3. **Localized Services:** Adapt services to local cultural, linguistic, and societal contexts. This ensures that therapy is relevant and effective for diverse populations.
4. **Community Outreach:** Implement strong awareness campaigns and collaborate with local organizations to reach potential users and destigmatize mental health support.

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☐ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☐ Stress management and re-generation
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behaviour
- ☐ Addictive behaviour
- ☒ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☒ Personal social networks
- ☐ Empowerment/participation
- ☐ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

5. **Scalability:** Design the initiative with scalability in mind to accommodate increasing demand without compromising service quality.
6. **Feedback Mechanisms:** Establish regular feedback loops from users to continually improve services based on their needs and experiences.
7. **Support Groups:** Incorporate support groups and community forums to provide additional layers of peer support.

Additional Information and Conclusions

website: <https://mentalhelp.com.ua/> Project mail: help@globalcompact.org.ua

Project manager: d.popko@globalcompact.org.ua

All-Ukrainian mental health programme

Initiated by Olena Zelenska "How Are You? NGO "Bezbariernist"

Ukraine

Main goals

The All-Ukrainian Mental Health Programme "How Are You?", initiated by Olena Zelenska in 2022, aims to develop a culture of mental health care in Ukraine. It includes communication campaigns and training projects implemented with the support of the WHO and other international partners. The programme covers a number of projects coordinated by different ministries to provide comprehensive mental health support to Ukrainians. The aim of the campaign is to promote a culture of care for mental health in society, to provide understanding and show tools that will help Ukrainians take care of their internal state.

Target groups

The target group of the "How Are You?" programme is the population of Ukraine, with a special focus on people affected by the war, including veterans, children, youth, and educators. The programme's vision is to develop comprehensive mental health support, build psychological resilience skills at all levels of education, and raise public awareness of the importance of mental health.

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☒ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☐ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☐ international
- ☒ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

Description of Intervention

The "How Are You?" project, initiated by Olena Zelenska as part of the All-Ukrainian mental health program, represents a significant intervention aimed at addressing mental health issues across Ukraine. This project is multifaceted employing various activities and strategies to achieve its goals. Here's a detailed overview of the activities and strategies employed during the intervention:

Program Objectives and Scope

The primary objective of the "How Are You?" program is to promote mental health awareness, reduce stigma associated with mental illness, and provide accessible support services to the Ukrainian population. The scope of the program encompasses:

- **Education and Awareness:** Educating the public about mental health issues, symptoms, and available treatments.
- **Support Services:** Providing mental health support services, including counseling and therapy.

- **Community Engagement:** Engaging communities in open discussions about mental health to foster understanding and empathy.
- **Policy Advocacy:** Advocating for policies that support mental health initiatives and services nationwide.

Activities Implemented

a. Awareness Campaigns

- **Media Campaigns:** Utilizing various media channels (TV, radio, social media) to disseminate information about mental health, promote awareness, and encourage help-seeking behaviours.
- **Public Events:** Organizing seminars, workshops, and public talks featuring mental health experts to educate the public and debunk myths surrounding mental illness.
- **Celebrity Endorsements:** Involving public figures to endorse the program and share personal stories to reduce stigma.

b. Education and Training

- **School Programs:** Implementing mental health education in schools to teach students about emotional well-being, stress management, and where to seek help.
- **Workplace Initiatives:** Partnering with businesses to provide mental health training for employees, creating supportive work environments.
- **Healthcare Professional Training:** Training healthcare providers in mental health first aid and treatment protocols to enhance mental health care delivery.

c. Support Services

- **Hotlines and Helplines:** Establishing toll-free helplines staffed by trained counselors to provide immediate support and referrals.
- **Online Resources:** Creating a comprehensive website with information on mental health conditions, self-help resources, and community support groups.
- **Mobile Apps:** Developing mobile applications for easy access to mental health resources and self-assessment tools.

d. Community Engagement

- **Support Groups:** Facilitating peer support groups for individuals living with mental illness and their families to share experiences and coping strategies.
- **Community Events:** Hosting community gatherings and activities that promote mental well-being, such as mindfulness sessions and art therapy workshops.
- **Volunteer Programs:** Recruiting and training volunteers to support outreach efforts and provide assistance to those in need.

Strategies Employed

a. Collaboration and Partnerships

- **Government Collaboration:** Partnering with government agencies to integrate mental

health services into existing healthcare systems and policies.

- **NGO Partnerships:** Collaborating with non-governmental organizations specializing in mental health to leverage resources and expertise.
- **International Cooperation:** Seeking support and guidance from international mental health organizations to adopt best practices and innovative approaches.

b. Research and Evaluation

- **Data Collection:** Collecting and analyzing data on mental health trends, service utilization, and program effectiveness to inform decision-making.
- **Impact Assessment:** Conducting regular evaluations and surveys to measure the program's impact on mental health awareness, stigma reduction, and access to services.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Using feedback from stakeholders to refine program activities and strategies for better outcomes.

c. Advocacy and Policy Influence

- **Policy Recommendations:** Advocating for policies that prioritize mental health funding, work- force development, and community-based interventions.
- **Media Advocacy:** Engaging with media outlets to raise awareness of mental health issues and influence public opinion and policy decisions.
- **Legal Reform:** Campaigning for legal reforms to protect the rights of individuals with mental illness and ensure equitable access to mental health services.

Challenges and Overcoming Them

a. Stigma and Cultural Barriers

- **Education Campaigns:** Addressing misconceptions about mental illness through targeted education and personal testimonies.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Tailoring interventions to respect cultural beliefs and practices related to mental health.

b. Resource Constraints

- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Leveraging private sector resources through corporate sponsor- ships and donations.
- **Grant Funding:** Applying for grants and funding opportunities from national and international sources to sustain program operations.

c. Infrastructure and Capacity Building

- **Training Programs:** Scaling up training initiatives for mental health professionals and volunteers to meet growing demand.
- **Technology Integration:** Investing in digital platforms and telehealth services to expand access to remote and underserved populations.

Successes and Future Directions

1. Success Metrics

- **Increased Awareness:** Measuring improved public knowledge and attitudes towards mental health issues.
- **Service Utilization:** Monitoring increased uptake of mental health services and helpline usage.
- **Policy Impact:** Documenting policy changes and legislative reforms influenced by program advocacy efforts.

2. Future Expansion

- **Regional Outreach:** Extending program reach to rural and underserved regions through mobile clinics and community outreach initiatives.
- **Specialized Services:** Introducing specialized services for vulnerable populations such as children, elderly, and veterans.
- **Long-term Sustainability:** Developing strategies for financial sustainability and long-term program viability.

In conclusion, the "How Are You?" program under the All-Ukrainian mental health initiative led by Olena Zelenska represents a comprehensive effort to address mental health challenges in Ukraine. Through a combination of awareness campaigns, education programs, support services, community engagement, and strategic partnerships, the program aims to create a more supportive environment for individuals with mental illness while advocating for systemic changes in mental health policies and practices. As the program continues to evolve and expand its reach, it underscores the importance of collaborative efforts and evidence-based approaches in promoting mental well-being across the nation.

Comparison Basis

The social project "School of Mental Health" is a mobile educational-resource hub aimed at promoting mental health among schoolchildren and students in Ivano-Frankivsk. The project has been ongoing since 2020. The goal of the "School of Mental Health" project is to broaden children's and young people's understanding of techniques for maintaining mental health and psychological well-being by improving their knowledge and practical skills in providing psychological help/self-help in difficult life situations. Interactive sessions help schoolchildren and students recognize and reduce psycho-emotional stress, increase their level of stress resistance, and enhance their ability to think critically. <https://agencyzmin.pnu.edu.ua/>

Evaluation of Outcomes

The "How Are You?" initiative was a well-intentioned effort aimed at addressing mental health awareness and support, but it was excluded from the best practices list for several reasons.

Lack of Measurable Impact: One of the primary reasons for its exclusion was the initiative's inability to demonstrate measurable impact. While raising awareness is important, the initiative did not provide concrete data or evidence showing a significant improvement in mental health outcomes among its target audience. Best practices require clear, measurable results to validate

their effectiveness.

Limited Scope and Reach: The initiative had a limited geographical and demographic reach. It primarily targeted urban areas, leaving rural and underserved communities without access to its resources. Best practices are typically inclusive and scalable, ensuring that diverse populations can benefit from them.

Sustainability Concerns: The "How Are You?" initiative faced sustainability issues. It relied heavily on short-term funding and volunteer support, which raised concerns about its long-term viability.

Lack of Comprehensive Approach: The initiative focused mainly on awareness campaigns and did not provide comprehensive mental health services such as counseling, therapy, or crisis intervention.

Insufficient Professional Involvement: There was a notable lack of involvement from mental health professionals in the planning and execution of the initiative.

Effective mental health initiatives typically include expertise from psychologists, psychiatrists, and other mental health experts to ensure that the strategies and interventions are evidence-based and effective.

Feedback and Adaptation: The initiative did not have a robust mechanism for gathering feedback from participants and adapting its strategies accordingly.

Integration with Existing Systems: The "How Are You?" initiative did not integrate well with existing mental health services and systems.

In conclusion, while the "How Are You?" initiative was a commendable effort in raising awareness about mental health, it fell short in several key areas required for it to be considered a best practice. To be recognized as such, initiatives must demonstrate measurable impact, inclusivity, sustainability, comprehensiveness, professional involvement, adaptability, and integration with existing systems.

Key findings and impacts on target group(s):

The main results of the initiative include: increased public awareness of mental health, reduced prejudice against working with psychologists (as according to sociological research cited by U-Report Ukraine, Ukrainians are not in the habit of seeking professional help: 31% of citizens do not consider their problems sufficient to do so). This problem is identified as the main barrier to seeking psychological help. As part of the initiative, a website was created that contains important

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☐ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☐ Stress management and re-generation
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behaviour
- ☐ Addictive behaviour
- ☒ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☒ Personal social networks
- ☐ Empowerment/participation
- ☐ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

contacts of organisations providing psychological support. This helps to overcome certain disorders and improve self-help skills. The programme also aims to create positive change through educational initiatives and cooperation with key institutions.

Challenges encountered and how they were addressed:

One of the main challenges of the programme is the prejudiced attitude of citizens towards professional psychological assistance, as this culture is poorly developed in the country, and many citizens have traumatic experiences that prevent them from seeking the necessary support. This challenge was overcome through an educational and communication campaign aimed at changing public attitudes.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

This practice has the potential to be adapted and scaled up to other levels and can be easily adapted to different cultural and social contexts, as it is based on universal mental health needs. What resources are required for implementation?

Engaging local partners and integrating with existing protection systems can facilitate effective implementation of the programme in new communities or even countries (many Ukrainian refugees have moved abroad).

Recommendations for Adaptation in Other Settings

To adapt the programme to other contexts, it is important to take into account cultural and social sensitivities, provide flexibility in the choice of training and support methods, engage local experts to ensure professional assistance, and work with local organisations and communities to increase the programme's ownership and impact.

Additional Information and Conclusions

Programme page - <https://www.howareu.com/>

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/howareu.program>

Instagram - https://www.instagram.com/howareu_program

YouTube - https://www.youtube.com/@howareu_programme

Twitter - <https://twitter.com/howareuprogram>

Telegram - https://t.me/howareu_program

TikTok - https://www.tiktok.com/@howareu_programme

Viber - <https://invite.viber.com/?g2=AQAYHzQp6XJwmVCkkkXeWJVdLF8eAQa8Pzq3NYgcLW-JGls3sN3tGibu5P%2BEH0rsb>

NGO "Bezbariarnoist" - <https://bbu.org.ua/>

Innovative programme for young people UPSHIFT

UNICEF

Ukraine

Main goals

The goal of the UPSHIFT programme is to support the most disadvantaged youth and help them become social innovators. The programme's objectives include offline training, mentoring, materials and funding for project implementation. This allows young people to find solutions to problems that concern them in the community where they live.

One of the main goals of UPSHIFT is to inspire young people, build their capacity and prepare them for the challenges of modern life.

Programme participants will learn how to work in a team, analyse challenges and think outside the box. With the support of a mentor, they will find effective solutions to their concerns and, as a result, create their own socially useful project and receive resources for its implementation. UPSHIFT participants create projects that aim to solve problems in their region related to the environment, education, mental health, child and youth development, assistance to IDPs, etc.

Target groups

The target group of the UPSHIFT programme is teenagers and young people aged 14 to 24 who are interested in solving urgent problems in their communities, schools or cities through the development and implementation of innovative projects.

Description of Intervention

The "Upshift" project is a youth innovation and social entrepreneurship program designed to empower young people with the skills, knowledge, and resources they need to identify problems in their communities and create solutions. Originating from UNICEF's global innovation initiatives, the project has been implemented in various countries, including Ukraine, with adaptations to fit local contexts and needs. Here is a detailed description of the activities and strategies employed during the intervention in the Upshift project.

1. Needs Assessment and Community Engagement

Activities:

Setting of the Best Practice

- ☐ Formal education
- ☒ Non-formal education
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☒ Social services
- ☒ Youth care/youth work
- ☒ Cultural service
- ☐ Other, specify:

Level of implementation

- ☒ international
- ☒ national
- ☐ regional
- ☐ county-level
- ☐ municipal

- **Initial Community Workshops:** Conducting workshops in local communities to understand the specific challenges and needs of youth. These workshops involve discussions with local leaders, educators, parents, and the youth themselves.
- **Surveys and Focus Groups:** Utilizing surveys and focus groups to gather quantitative and qualitative data about the most pressing issues facing young people in the community.

Strategies:

- **Participatory Approach:** Engaging youth in the assessment process to ensure their voices and perspectives are central to identifying community problems.
- **Data-Driven Planning:** Using data collected from surveys and focus groups to inform the design of the program, ensuring it addresses the real needs of the community.

1. Recruitment and Selection

Activities:

- **Outreach Campaigns:** Implementing outreach campaigns through schools, community centers, and social media to inform and encourage youth to participate in the program.
- **Application Process:** Establishing an application process where young people can propose their project ideas addressing specific community issues.
- **Selection Panels:** Forming panels consisting of community leaders, educators, and experts to review applications and select the most promising projects.

Strategies:

- **Inclusive Recruitment:** Ensuring the recruitment process is accessible to all young people, including marginalized and vulnerable groups.
- **Transparent Selection:** Maintaining transparency in the selection process to build trust and ensure fairness.

2. Capacity Building and Training

Activities:

- **Workshops and Training Sessions:** Organizing a series of workshops covering topics such as problem-solving, project management, leadership, teamwork, and communication.
- **Skill-Building Activities:** Providing hands-on activities where participants can practice new skills, such as designing project plans, budgeting, and marketing.
- **Mentorship Programs:** Pairing participants with mentors who can offer guidance, support, and expertise throughout the project development process.

Strategies:

- **Practical Learning:** Emphasizing practical, experiential learning to help participants apply new skills directly to their projects.
- **Continuous Support:** Offering ongoing mentorship and support to ensure participants can navigate challenges and stay motivated.

3. Project Development and Implementation

Activities:

- **Idea Generation and Refinement:** Facilitating brainstorming sessions to help participants

generate and refine their project ideas.

- **Project Planning:** Assisting participants in developing detailed project plans, including goals, timelines, budgets, and evaluation metrics.
- **Resource Allocation:** Providing necessary resources, such as funding, materials, and access to networks, to support project implementation.

Strategies:

- **Iterative Development:** Encouraging an iterative approach where participants can test, receive feedback, and refine their projects.
- **Resource Optimization:** Ensuring resources are used effectively and efficiently to maximize impact.

2. Monitoring and Evaluation

Activities:

- **Regular Check-Ins:** Scheduling regular check-ins with participants to monitor progress, address challenges, and provide additional support as needed.
- **Mid-Project Reviews:** Conducting mid-project reviews to assess progress, make adjustments, and share best practices among participants.
- **Final Evaluations:** Performing final evaluations to assess the outcomes and impact of each project.

Strategies:

- **Feedback Loops:** Establishing feedback loops where participants can receive constructive feedback and make improvements.
- **Outcome Measurement:** Using specific, measurable indicators to evaluate the success and impact of projects.

3. Sustainability and Scale-Up

Activities:

- **Sustainability Planning:** Assisting participants in developing sustainability plans to ensure their projects can continue beyond the initial funding and support period.
- **Networking and Partnerships:** Facilitating connections with potential partners, sponsors, and other stakeholders who can support project sustainability and scale-up.
- **Showcase Events:** Organizing events where participants can present their projects to the community, potential funders, and partners.

Strategies:

- **Long-Term Vision:** Encouraging participants to think long-term and consider how their projects can be sustained and scaled.
- **Collaborative Networks:** Building networks and partnerships to support ongoing project development and expansion.

4. Advocacy and Awareness

Activities:

- **Public Campaigns:** Launching public awareness campaigns to highlight the importance of youth-led innovation and social entrepreneurship.
- **Media Engagement:** Engaging with local and national media to share stories of successful

projects and promote the program.

- **Policy Advocacy:** Working with policymakers to advocate for supportive policies and environments that enable youth innovation and social entrepreneurship.

Strategies:

- **Storytelling:** Using storytelling to humanize the impact of youth-led projects and inspire others.
- **Policy Influence:** Leveraging successful projects as case studies to advocate for systemic changes that support youth innovation.

5. Reflection and Learning

Activities:

- **Reflection Sessions:** Conducting reflection sessions where participants can share their experiences, challenges, and learnings.
- **Program Evaluation:** Evaluating the overall program to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** Creating platforms for knowledge sharing among participants, mentors, and other stakeholders.

Strategies:

- **Continuous Improvement:** Using reflections and evaluations to continuously improve the program.
- **Community of Practice:** Building a community of practice where participants and stakeholders can continue to learn from each other.

Impact and Outcomes

The impact of the Upshift project is multifaceted, including:

- **Empowered Youth:** Participants gain valuable skills and confidence, empowering them to be active agents of change in their communities.
- **Community Benefits:** The projects developed through Upshift address real community issues, leading to tangible improvements in areas such as education, health, and social inclusion.
- **Sustainable Solutions:** Many projects develop sustainable solutions that continue to benefit communities long after the initial intervention.
- **Policy Influence:** Successful projects and the overall program can influence local and national policies to create a more supportive environment for youth innovation.

In conclusion, the Upshift project employs a comprehensive approach that combines community engagement, capacity building, project development, and sustainability planning to empower young people to create positive change in their communities. Through its structured activities and strategic focus, Upshift not only addresses immediate community needs but also fosters a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship among youth.

The total duration of the programme is 3-4 months, covering the application and review period, online research, 4 days of training bootcamp, and about 3 months of work on the implementation of the developed project. The programme enables ten teams, which must consist of three to five members, to implement their project with the help of finance. The amount for one project is UAH

72 thousand. The teams are also provided with mentoring from a certified mentor who is trained before the programme wave is implemented. In terms of material resources, teams receive the necessary materials (often machinery, cosmetic repairs of premises, equipment) and tools for working on projects, which they themselves purchase according to their needs within their own projects. These resources are aimed at developing the skills of participants, supporting innovation and stimulating social change in communities.

Comparison Basis

The Influential Project <https://www.instagram.com/vplyvovi>

The goal of the Influential project is to engage young people in the development of their communities. Interested communities with active youth fill out an application form to participate in the competition. 20 hromadas are selected on a competitive basis, which already attract active participants themselves. The UPSHIFT programme is designed in such a way that communication with participants is direct, so the impact on the target audience is greater.

Evaluation of Outcomes

Among the key success criteria for the UPSHIFT programme are the evaluation of the number and quality of youth projects implemented, the improvement of participants' skills, including leadership, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving, and the impact of these projects on communities. Another important criterion is the involvement and activity of young people in the development and implementation of projects, as well as the sustainability of participants' initiatives and their scaling up to other endeavours.

UPSHIFT uses a combined approach to project evaluation that includes both quantitative and qualitative methods. This allows us to assess not only the number of results achieved by counting the number of participants impacted by the programme, the number of activities and events held, etc. but also helps to evaluate the deeper impact on participants and their communities. Evaluation includes analysing the success of projects, measuring the development of participants' skills, and assessing the social impact of initiatives. Evaluation practice helps the programme to adapt to the challenges of participants and their needs.

Key findings and impacts on target group(s):

The UPSHIFT programme has achieved a significant impact, given its scalability to a number of countries. The main results of the programme are seen in the direct implementation of youth social projects and the development of the relevant skills necessary for their implementation. Programme participants learn to solve the problems of their communities, develop leadership,

health-relevant determinants

Individual knowledge and personal lifestyle

- ☒ Attitudes, norms, values, beliefs
- ☐ Personal education, knowledge
- ☒ Competencies (health, life and social skills)
- ☐ Stress management and regeneration
- ☐ Exercise/physical activity
- ☐ Nutritional behaviour
- ☐ Addictive behaviour
- ☒ Other

Social & community networks

- ☒ Social support structures / services
- ☒ Personal social networks
- ☐ Empowerment/participation
- ☐ Networking of professional actors
- ☐ Other

creativity, and co-operation skills. The young people participating in UPSHIFT not only implement their own ideas, but also make real changes in their communities by creating projects that address pressing issues ranging from the environment to education and health.

The UPSHIFT programme has had a positive impact on the mental health of adolescents. While its main goal is skills development and social innovation, mental health support is also an important component.

Here's how UPSHIFT can help improve adolescents' mental health:

Emotional support: Inclusion in a programme that promotes self-expression and personal development can help adolescents better cope with emotional challenges.

Developing problem-solving skills: Teaching adolescents to analyse problems in their communities and develop solutions promotes critical thinking and a sense of control over their lives.

Strengthening social ties: Creating and maintaining strong social ties through working together on projects can help reduce feelings of isolation and improve social skills.

Increase self-esteem and self-efficacy: Participation in projects that have a positive impact on the community can increase adolescents' self-esteem and strengthen their self-confidence.

UPSHIFT helps adolescents to feel important and useful members of society, which is an important factor in maintaining mental health.

Challenges encountered and how they were addressed:

UPSHIFT is a programme that uses innovative approaches in terms of methodology. Like any innovative programme that is just being created, it faces challenges such as attracting and retaining the interest of young people, adapting the programme to different cultural and social contexts, and ensuring the sustainability of projects. Ways to overcome these challenges include adapting learning materials to the needs of participants, strengthening mentoring support, collaborating with local organisations to ensure the projects' long-term impact, and actively using feedback to continuously improve the programme.

(Up)Scalability and allocation

The UPSHIFT programme can easily adapt and expand to new regions because it is flexible and can respond to different community needs. To make the programme work in a new location, it is important to take into account local circumstances and find partners among local organisations and authorities.

What resources are required for implementation?

The UPSHIFT project requires a variety of resources, including financial support for the development and implementation of youth initiatives, mentors and specialists to mentor participants, and material resources for project work. It is also important to partner with local organisations and communities whenever possible to ensure the sustainability of projects and their impact on the community.

Recommendations for Adaptation in Other Settings

To adapt the UPSHIFT programme to other contexts, it is important to take into account the cultural, social and economic characteristics of the region where the programme is being implemented. It is also worth conducting an in-depth analysis of the needs of young people, adapting training

materials and methods to local specifics, and engaging local experts and organisations to mentor and support projects.

Additional Information and Conclusions

Programme page - <https://upshiftukraine.org/pro-upshift/>

UNICEF - <https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/upshift-ukraine>

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/UPSHIFTUkraine>

Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/upshiftukraine/>