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Project “Click for Support”

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The project coordination reports

The first year of “Click for Support”

After almost one year of “Click for Support” the project team has gained lots of information and insight about web-based interventions (WBIs). In the following the major outcomes for the research and assessment phase are described.

Research

During the research phase 45 offers in the 13 EU-countries have been identified and assessed as adequate to be considered in the project. Most offers have been found in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany whereas none were reported in Slovakia, Luxembourg and Portugal.

The criteria defined prior to the research that the offers were supposed to meet in order to be included, were in fact not met by most of the reported WBIs. They were supposed to be web-based and provide professional feedback, include interactive elements and be based in selective prevention. They should address young people using illicit drugs, especially new psychoactive substances (NPS). The results, however, have been sobering as only a small number of existing offers are addressed to young people, and even less in the field of illicit drugs. All of the project partners had to adjust their focus of research at least slightly and included offers for alcohol, tobacco and other topics as well as offers for wider target groups or even the whole population. It is safe to say that there are no sufficient offers regarding new psychoactive substances or “Legal Highs”.¹

The WBIs described in previous chapter differ immensely in terms of interactive elements like self-tests, games, structured intervention programs, quizzes, games, chats, forums and email functions.

Another set-back has been that most of the researched WBIs have not been professionally evaluated regarding their effectiveness which made the assessment along the EMCDDA criteria harder and put more emphasis on the assessment through the target group.

Target group workshops

In the national workshops with the target group the project partners were supposed to recruit 20 young drug consumers and gather their feedback on WBIs in general and on the existing national examples.

Although the majority of the workshop participants stated a general interest in WBIs, only a very small part already knew some online offers and even less had already used some before the workshop. The cooperation with the youngsters during the workshops, focus groups and interviews has been an overall very positive experience and valuable knowledge and information has been gathered and through a survey and the discussion results it was possible to get a comprehensive feedback from the target group.

¹ One exception might be the relatively new offer <https://legal-high-inhaltsstoffe.de/> which has been established after the research phase.



Lots of things have been positively mentioned about some of the presented WBIs, for instance the quality of information, design and the opportunity of exchange with other users but at the same time other offers needed improvement exactly in the same areas.

The following aspects came up during the discussion: The most important issues for the youngsters have been the design, a clear structure, the functionality, especially the possibility to use the offer on smart phones; but also data security was an issue. Essential for the target group to accept an offer is a positive attitude of the communication. Youngsters do not want professionals lecturing them, but to be encouraged and motivated and get objective information about drugs. It could also increase their interest to include some playful quizzes and games to reflect their usual habits.

It should be noted that the opinions of adults, e.g. professionals working with the target group or providers differ considerably from those of the youngsters, e.g. regarding design, content and focus and presentation of information. However, the opinions and tastes among the participants are different as well.

After the assessments with the youngsters it is now obvious that a lot has to be done in the field, the supply of web-based offers is scarce in most countries and against the initial expectations, the majority of young people had not used any web-based methods yet.

The official summary of the country reports is currently in final editing and will soon be available on the project homepage.

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Interim Conference in Athens

From Dec. 3rd to Dec. 5th the Interim Conference of “Click for Support” took place in Athens, Greece. After the first phase of the project, the project team now had the chance to discuss the results with the entire group.

Every partner got the chance to report from their national experiences with the target group and the current situation regarding web-based interventions in their countries. Additional to the national reports three experts on web-based interventions provided their expertise from different perspectives on the topic. Dr. Peter Tossmann (Germany) presented success and failure factors and general possibilities for web-based selective drug prevention, Matthijs Blankers (the Netherlands) focused on the research and evidence perspective of web-based intervention whereas Herwig Claeys (Belgium) approached the topic from a more technical angle.

After the first day of the conference, everybody was now on the same page regarding the results and experiences of the first project phase. Based on those results and experiences and the input from the experts, on the second conference day the group defined important aspects for the guidelines and controversial issues that should be discussed in the upcoming Delphi study among European prevention experts. Also issues of dissemination, e.g. the LinkedIn group were discussed.



After two very productive days of work in Athens, the project coordination is now very well prepared to take up the challenge of developing applicable and valuable guidelines.

Finally, worth mentioning is the fact that the project has even raised interest in Brazil which was shown by the attendance of a colleague from the Brazilian Ministry of Justice who had learned about the project through the EMCDDA.

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The LinkedIn network

The LinkedIn network for “Click for support” has been established in order to discuss important aspects of web-based interventions (WBIs) as well as to get feedback from experts on the guidelines. The reason for using a social network for the discussion is the aim to raise awareness among prevention experts for the technologies that young people use in their daily life and to promote the usage of those technologies in prevention work.

The network has been established after the project kick-off in February 2014 and currently includes 70 members; the goal is to recruit 200 international experts on prevention and web-based methods in total.

During the first phase of the project the discussions in the LinkedIn group have been rather cautious – some examples like “Know Cannabis” (www.knowcannabis.org.uk) from the UK and “Click your Story” (www.click-your-story.ch) from Switzerland as well as some apps have been shared and been commented on but apart from that discussions mostly concentrated on an exchange of experiences from the assessments with the target group.

The following is one of the group discussions about the workshops with young drug consumers:

“What did the workshops or interviews with youngsters learn us? In every participating country web-based interventions were discussed in workshops or interviews with youngsters. What interesting feedback concerning future guidelines was given by youngsters?”

“What (unsurprisingly) jumped out in every workshop in the Netherlands is that design is paramount. The first look at a site often determined if the site would be used at all, if the site was interactive and well written. Two other things that were mentioned by almost all participants were contact with others (forums are still popular) and the possibility to use the site or at least the interactive content, on a mobile platform. Although desktop PC’s and laptops are still used frequently, every single participant used either a phone or tablet as the primary way to access web-based content.”

“In the workshops that took place in Athens, the main feature for a web-based intervention that almost all participants insisted on being important was accurate and up-to-date scientific information on all substances and their effects on the human body, presented in a ‘non-boring’, ‘interesting for young people’ way, through stories and interaction, with pictures, graphics, videos, music etc.”

“Data security (in terms of illegal substances) was also a big issue in Austria. Also well prepared and scientifically information has been essential but it still needs to be linguistically simple. I think web based interventions would be a good thing for local (!) counseling centers to expand and to promote their offers.”

Until now the interaction in the LinkedIn network has been rather timid but once the first draft of the guidelines is ready for discussion, this should be a good motivation for the group members to get more involved in the group and provide an incentive for other experts to join the network. Hopefully a fruitful exchange of expertise will happen when there is a clear objective for the group, namely to develop practical and useful guidelines for development and implementation of web-based interventions.

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Web-based interventions in Europe

The Portuguese reality of web-based interventions (WBIs)

Using the internet has become one of the most popular leisure activities in our society. Particularly among adolescents and young adults, the internet has been adopted as a readily accessible way to get information, for entertainment, shopping and socialization.

A study in six European countries² that was conducted by Irefrea in 2013 showed that 12.9 % of the sample (N=7,921 adolescents) were online for more than 20 hours per week. The question arises of what young people do when they are online? What they are looking for?

Now "Click for Support" gives us the opportunity to gain a better understanding of young people's usage of new technologies and of course to develop guidelines for web-based interventions.

In Portugal we started to do an inventory of the national interventions on drugs through the research on national databases, contacts with national NGO's, the National Institute on Drugs and Drug Abuse and universities working in the field. This has not been an easy task due to shortage of information at national level.

Nine websites have been found, mainly supplying information on substances but almost no interaction with users. Effects of drug consumption are rarely described. In general the websites are not very appealing, especially regarding the target group of young people. Surprisingly, there is more information on Brazilian websites but despite the same language, the substances do not have the same name and not all terms are equal; therefore they are not perfectly suitable for the Portuguese youngsters.

The most challenging and interesting part of the project so far has been the youth workshops. The following points are the main conclusions of the workshops:

- Portuguese youngsters need more updated Portuguese websites.
- The websites need to be more interactive.
- Offers should include advice to handle risky situations, consequences of drug consumption, chats, opinions from ex-consumers and information about treatment facilities. Substances in focus were alcohol, cannabis, ecstasy and legal highs.
- The information should be provided in an easy understandable way but also be based on evidence.
- The design of the website should be appealing and include fun elements like games and quizzes.

We are excited about the project and we hope that it will be a valuable tool and a work platform for all who make health a priority.

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² European Family Empowerment: Improving family skills to prevent alcohol and drug related problems, JLS/2008/DPIP/AG/112 30-CE-0312762/00-34), published in 2014



Current situation and preliminary outcomes in Slovakia

Research

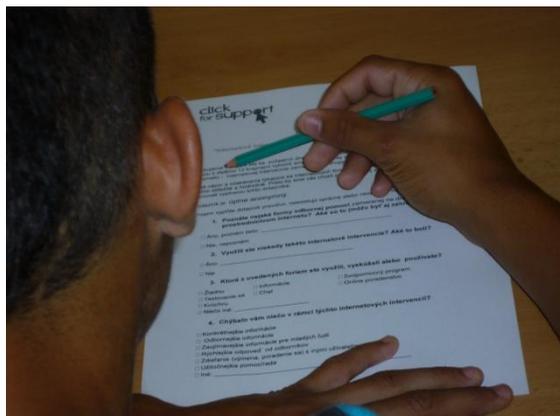
The Slovak partners “Prevention V&P” made several efforts to find existing national web-based interventions (WBIs), including using search engines, national databases and websites of state health facilities for drug users. Several NGOs and other experts have been contacted and asked if they were providing or knew any kind of web-based offers.

In Slovakia web-based prevention offers seem to be restricted to simple supplies of information and professionally run discussion forums but no offers that meet the defined criteria. However, scientific evidence, supported by examples of good practice from abroad, could establish a solid basis for building up web-based services focused on young people in Slovakia in the future.

Workshop

“Prevention V&P” conducted two workshops with 21 participants in total. The first group, aged less 16 years, consisted of clients of a state residential institution for youngsters between twelve and 16 years who showed various problems and behavioral disorders in school settings. Many of those clients had their first experiences with drugs between the ages of seven to ten. They smoke cigarettes, most of them marihuana; all of them had experiences with misusing alcohol and many come from poor homes. The second group of youngsters (16-17 years) has been recruited in low threshold facilities. Those youngsters were occasional marihuana and pill users.

A productive discussion was enabled by presenting the German example “Quit for shit”. The youngsters were very cooperative and openly answered all questions.



Throughout the workshops several things struck out:

- Young people in Slovakia have no experience with WBIs. Only social networks like Facebook are used for an exchange of information and experiences with peers.
- However, youngsters seem to prefer help from professionals.
- Participants mostly assessed WBIs as very useful for others but were not very interested in using them themselves.
- Youngsters would prefer using WBIs on their smart phone or tablet, i.e. smaller and portable devices.



- WBIs should foremost provide help and advice as well as reliable information about the risks and effects of drugs.

Conclusion

The Slovak project team is very motivated to contribute to the development of guidelines for good quality WBIs as well as to raise awareness on the importance of using web-based techniques in the daily work of prevention experts. Through a cooperation with the “Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology” “Prevention V&P” has the opportunity to discuss and verify preliminary project outcomes with professionals on a national level. We expect to initiate interest and a professional debate about web-based offers in Slovakia and hope that this approach will become a part of the national policy and national calls providing financial support to projects in area of secondary drug prevention will be promoted.

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Click for Support in Luxembourg – Methodological procedure and results

In the framework of the INTERREG IV-project “MAG-Net 2”³, the internet is confirmed as the main source of data and information about psychoactive substances. Furthermore, “Click for Support” gave us (“CePT- Centre de Prévention des Toxicomanies”) the opportunity to find out, to which extent web-based support offers exist in Luxembourg in the field of addiction prevention/help as well as if and how the target group of youngsters aged 14-21 years uses these offers.

Our assumption was that in this field none or only a very small number of web-based counselling or self-assessment offers exist in Luxembourg. If this assumption would be confirmed, it would have to be checked if the target group knows and uses foreign websites.

Methodology

Online research of national web-based addiction counselling was conducted and for verification and fine adjustment, a round table discussion with national experts from the field of addiction prevention and addiction counselling (incl. representatives of the police and the Health Ministry) was organized.

From April to August 2014 133 people were surveyed using a short questionnaire in different settings (e.g. festival goers and young cannabis consumers in the waiting room of an early intervention service centre). The following points have been addressed:

- If they were looking for information about drugs online and if yes, which kind of substances they were looking for.
- What kind of offer they were looking for, e.g. information, self-tests or counselling.
- What kind of professional help services and support they knew in Luxembourg or otherwise and what kind of web-based professional offer they had already used (email, chat, forum).
- If they shared information with friends, e.g. via social networks.

Results

Three Luxembourgish offers for web-based counselling have been identified through the online research. However, two of them are not considered as services in the field of addiction when it comes to web-based counselling. The third offer is CePT own “FroNo”-service, with its classic telephone offer that also encourages submitting questions via email. However, the “FroNo”-service only offers information about substances and consulting and planning services. The CePT itself does not offer addiction counselling.

Through the survey (n=133) it became clear that generally the respondents rarely search for help on the web. If they do research online, they look for information about psychoactive substances as well as for substance consumption, using national or international online sources as well as Google, Wikipedia or Youtube. Exchange with friends takes place via Facebook, WhatsApp, etc.

³ (Nr. 128 GR DELUX 3 3 249, see www.mag-net.eu)



Additional to the research, expert consultations and the survey, three workshops were conducted with 15 young cannabis consumer of an early intervention program who had already participated in the survey. During the discussion they declared that they would look for information online but not specifically for “help” as they do not consider themselves as in need for care. Therefore, avoiding keywords like “problems” or “help” in the foreground of such websites should be part of the strategy to effectively reach the target group. The attractive presentation of information should present enough motivation for them to check out sections like “counselling” or “help”, too. The discussions during the workshops led to several points that are important to the youngsters regarding an attractive online offer:

- Appealing design (including visuals) and not too much text (too much text appears reserved and has an adult look)
- Content with objective information (e.g. about safer use) which is up to date and comes in different languages (especially in Luxembourg). The offer should avoid a schoolmasterly attitude.
- Structure with a good overview and attracting keywords, easy handling, interactive elements

Conclusions and recommendations

At the present time no web-based counselling or other support offers in the field of addiction care exist in Luxembourg. A nationwide portal which operates as a centralised helpdesk could contribute to a better access to information, help to maintain existing offers and give better opportunities for comparison of infrastructure and service offers.

For Luxembourg the closing national conference of “Click for Support” in the summer of 2015 is considered a good possibility to enforce the discussion about web-based support, to raise awareness for the topic and to present the elaborated guidelines to the expert public.

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Workshops with young drug consumers

Workshop results from Italy

In Italy there are only a few approaches of WBIs, i.e. websites including online consulting via email or chat, information about the most common legal and illegal substances and consumption self-tests. Regardless, most of the existing websites in Italy are not very appealing to youngsters as the design, structure and content are out of date and not fitting the target group.

The following insights have been gained through the workshops in Italy:

The participants were generally interested in WBIs and some had already used offers from other countries, prevalently for getting information about pill warnings, safer use or experiences from other users. Accordingly, the expected information from WBIs is about safer use, pill warnings and reports from others. Online consulting and helpful elements like self-tests are desired offers as well.

It also has been noticed that the level of interest in WBIs depends on the attitude towards one's own consumption; those who were already critically eyeing their consumption, showed a higher interest. Furthermore, the attitude of the WBI is very important in order to reach the target group who wishes for objective and value-free offers and information transfer and does not appreciate one-sided information and prohibitionist offers. Therefore good-quality information should be provided in an objective and factual manner.

In terms of content and design, the users want the offers that speak their language, which means using only a few and understandable texts, lots of visuals as well as interactive surfaces and although the content should be provided by experts, peer education plays an important role, too. Therefore a part of the content should be able to be created by the users themselves.

What has been mentioned repeatedly was the issue of data security. Young people are concerned about providing private information, especially regarding confidential information possibly reaching the police or their parents.

Finally, regarding the applicability of guidelines for WBIs, it is important to find a way to keep those guidelines open and adaptable, in order to be able to react easily to the constantly changing technologies and ways of communication.

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Greek insights on web-based interventions (WBIs)

For the purposes of “Click for Support” two workshops were conducted in Athens with the participation of 20 young volunteers (13 boys and seven girls from 16 to 21 years). They were recruited through the Adolescent Unit “ATRAPOS” of the Organization against Drugs; all of them are Athens residents, have used illicit drugs for a period of time in their lives and are currently in the first steps of their therapeutic process.

During the workshops the participants’ knowledge (or lack of) on WBIs (websites, applications etc), their thoughts on whether such interventions sound interesting, important and/or useful and their opinion on what such an intervention should provide were discussed.

The next step was to introduce “RESIST” (created by the Drug Prevention Center “Elpida” in 2008) which is an educational game that tries to negotiate drug related concepts in the language of adolescents, utilizing the computer as a medium familiar to them. The scientific approach is based on the provision of information and knowledge and enhancement of personal or social skills, e.g. decision making skills, peer pressure resistance etc. The participants also got the chance to explore “RESIST” and experiment with its features.

The main feature that almost all participants insisted on being important for WBIs is accurate and up-to-date scientific information on legal and illicit substances and their effects. This information needs to be presented in a “non-boring” and “interesting for young people” way, through stories and interaction, including pictures, graphics, videos, music etc. Another important feature is specific and personalized feedback and help, according to individual needs, with recommended steps to follow and also contact and information for further help and advice.

However, some participants expressed their concern that when one gets really involved with drugs and drug abuse, they are not likely to turn to a WBI for help or to any other kind of help for that matter. Such interventions apply to people who are curious about drugs and/or are in the process of using for their first time.

For the purposes of “Click for Support” an overall conclusion from the workshops is that a drug-related WBI should focus on its content (in terms of quality, reliability, accuracy and credibility), on its design and aesthetics (in terms of clear and attractive layout, interactivity, graphics, use of media) and on personalized feedback and advice for its users.

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Athens, Greece*

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Assessment phase with the target group in Finland

The project phase of assessing the researched national web-based intervention offers with the target group was not an easy process for “EHYT – Finnish Association for Substance Abuse prevention”, the Finnish partner of “Click for Support”. They had to deal with a chain of problems that came up during the process of conducting the workshops.

Because EHYT does not directly encounter with young people with substance abuse problems, its possibilities to reach the target group have not been evaluated as sufficient; therefore it has been decided to collect the data among young people who belong to child protection's support activities.

The initial plan was to hold two group meetings in the same establishment, through which EHYT expected to reach twenty young people. However, due to different reasons, e.g. summer holidays, runaways in institutions and uncooperative youngsters who would rather stay in their rooms than participate in the meeting, four separate meetings in four different institutions had to be organized instead. In addition, a fifth and final meeting was held in a special needs school, so that finally the sufficient number of participants in Finland has been reached.

The meetings had very different atmospheres, mostly they were relatively quiet and peaceful but the young people did not show much interest in the presented applications, at least partly because some of them did not seem to regard their substance abuse as a problem.

The meeting in the special needs school, however, was different. It included eleven participants from different classes and in contrast to the other meetings the youngster's concentration was almost completely lost after half an hour and it was not possible to complete the program.

Nevertheless, EHYT has organized five target group meetings and gained feedback on the presented information from young people. However, the conclusion has been drawn that individual meetings or conversations with two youngsters at a time could have produced more satisfactory outcomes.

Ilmo Jokinen

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Helsinki, Finland*

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Next steps

Following the Interim Conference the project coordination will now start with the development of the guidelines. Important statements will be discussed with international experts via two rounds of an online Delphi study, in order to gain consent on what needs to be included in the guidelines. The study participants will have the opportunity to agree or disagree with suggested statements or recommendations and provide arguments for either position. In the second round everyone will get the chance to adjust their opinion, based on the results of the first one.

In this phase all partners, experts and other stakeholders are strongly encouraged to provide input and suggest changes and improvements to the guidelines.

For further discussion experts on prevention and web-based methods are invited to join “Click for Support’s” [LinkedIn-network](#), whose members will be automatically included in the Delphi study. For those who would like to participate in the Delphi study, but are opposed to joining the network, please send an email to the [project coordination](#).

The final guidelines will be available after the Final Conference of the project from June 8th until June 10th 2015 in Münster, Germany.

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