



YOUTH AND INCLUSION

MENTAL WELL-BEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE

On October 10th, we acknowledged the world mental health day. To recognize this important day, SERN hosted a webinar on the mental well-being of young people, as part of the SERN Thematic Wall (STW) focusing on Youth and Inclusion from September until January next year. The webinar took place the day before, on October 9th, and started with an introduction of the theme by Ginevra Roli, project manager at SERN, who provided an overview of the topic, and also more specifically, the EU context and framework on young people's mental health.

The overview included the EU Youth Strategy which aims to improve the situation of young people in Europe by creating more and equal opportunities. The youth strategy consists of three core areas; Engage, Connect and Empower.

Engage seeks to encourage young peoples participation in civic and democratic life. Connect aims to connect young people across the EU and beyond to promote volunteering opportunities to learn abroad, solidarity and intercultural understanding. Finally, Empower means to support youth empowerment through boosting innovation, as well as the quality and recognition of youth work.

In the specific area of youths health and well-being the EU Youth Strategy have a specific focus on six different subjects:

Promoting mental and sexual health, sport, physical activity and healthy lifestyles

Preventing and treating injury, eating disorders, addictions and substance abuse

Raising awareness of how sport can promote teamwork, intercultural learning and responsibility

Promoting cooperation between schools, youth workers, health professionals and sports organisations

Education on nutrition

Making health facilities more accessible and attractive for young people

BRIDGE PROJECT

Since the webinar regarded the mental well-being of young people (one of three different tracks on SERN Thematic Wall on the theme of youth inclusion) Ginevra Roli also mentioned the SERN's BRIDGE project.

BRIDGE, funded by the Erasmus+ Programme, aims to increase the quality of school education through development of a whole-school approach to well-being. The project spans three years (2023-2026) and the Municipality of Luleå is the leading partner.



BRIDGE

Building Resilient compulsory schools through an Integrated and EmpowerinG approach to well-being

The BRIDGE project originates from the collective ambition of partner organizations to innovate the education system, fostering greater well-being within school environments.

MUNICIPALITY OF LULEÅ



After the introduction by SERN the webinar continued with representatives from Luleå municipality; Lillemor Östman, development leader in health and learning and PhD in health science, and Frida Sundström, school social worker.

During the week of the seminar it happened to be the so called “Mental health week” in Luleå. The mental health week is held in Luleå every year and includes lectures and activities with the purpose of promoting mental health and well-being. The aim of the mental health week is to inform, educate, reduce the stigma around mental health and encourage activities that promote mental health.



Frida Sundström continued to explain how Luleå acts to prevent suicide among young people. There, the municipality implement practices from a book developed by the Swedish non-profit organisation Suicide Zero called “Essential talks of life”. The book is developed by psychologists, psychiatrists, researchers and teachers and is aimed at children between 3rd to 6th grade and aspire to teach how to identify and talk about feelings while also finding healthy coping strategies.

Essential talk of life is not only evidence based but it's also based on the Swedish primary school curriculum, making it easy to implement in schools.

Essential Talks of Life

Prepare your child for life.

A part of the Livsviktiga Snak- initiative from Suicide Zero



The book treats four different themes:

- Identify and talk about feelings
- Mental and physical development, norms and privilege
- Psychoeducation
- Coping strategies

According to Sundström, research clearly shows that the ability to express feelings is one of the most important protective factors in life. If children learn how to express their feelings while practicing problem solving with adults the risk of suicide, depression, use of drugs or violence among children is reduced. In Sundström's view, learning these techniques serves as a vaccine against mental health issues.

MUNICIPALITY OF PARMA



Comune di Parma



Chiara Rossi works for the Municipality of Parma as a director of LED (Laboratorio Energieducative Didattiche) and she discussed and informed about the THESEUS program. THESEUS program is a strategy by the Municipality of Parma to promote well-being and mental health in the schools of Parma. The aim is also to provide psychological, pedagogical and intercultural resources for students aged 10-16. As of now, there is 13 schools and 4800 students involved in the program.

The THESEUS program is managed by LED, Laboratory of Educative and Developmental Energies. THESEUS was born 24 years ago to fill a gap by providing a structured psychological support service in Italian public schools, which did not previously exist. Specifically, the THESEUS program provides what they call “well being teams” inside of the schools. The THESEUS program is the most extensive program in Parma schools

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In Italy it is estimated that 16.6% of students aged 10-19 suffer from mental health problems.

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The program is a collaborative program, which means that the schools and LED have a lot of meetings together to share

opinions in order to tailor the programs according to the needs of the students. The teams are multidisciplinary and include psychologists, pedagogues, career counselors, intercultural mediators and social educators. The team have an empathic approach that address equality, diversity and multicultural aspects of the students and teachers. These teams support both students, the school staff and parents.

Specifically the team offer support through two different aspects. The first aspect is prevention where they are helping the school by creating a safe and open environment. The second is identification, which aims to recognize emerging issues as early and accurately as possible where the key strands being reviewed is:

- Attendance
- Social and emotional progress/distress
- Behaviour, exclusions and reintegration
- Academic achievement
- Difficult relationship with parents and family



Although schools and well being teams play a significant role in promoting mental health and wellbeing, their contribution is not enough.

Therefore, the Municipality of Parma have launched a wider multi-agency approach is required. The multiagency aims to bring together teachers, well being team, social services, mental health services, voluntary and community sector organisations and together work towards the objective.

Chiara Rossi also mentioned the negative effects that the Covid-19 pandemic caused on youths mental health. Since young people were not allowed to go to school in Italy for two years their social life were to a great extent reduced, causing harm on their well-being and the number of people with mental health issues to rose.

Thanks to all the speakers!



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