

Key Action: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices
Action Type: Strategic Partnerships for vocational education and training

Project Title

Innovative Web Approach for Advancing and Sustaining VET Learners' Wellbeing and Mental Health

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Project Information

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Partners MEDNARODNA ZVEZA ZA ZDRAVJE MLADIH - INTERNATIONAL YOUTH HEALTH ORGANIZATION (SI) , AKMI ANONIMI EKPAIDEFTIKI ETAIRIA (EL) , Foyle International Ltd. (UK) , PSICHIKOS SVEIKATOS PERSPEKTYVOS VIESOJI ISTAIGA (LT) , KUTAHYA DUMLUPINAR UNIVERSITESI (TR) , EUROPEAN CENTER FOR QUALITY OOD (BG)
Topics Overcoming skills mismatches (basic/transversal) ; Health and wellbeing ; New innovative curricula/educational methods/development of training courses

Project Summary

The problem of wellbeing has been recently brought to the forefront of the agenda for improving quality of VET in Europe. There is a growing recognition that for teaching and learning to be effective, students should have high levels of wellbeing (OECD, 2018). The latest research, however, proves that students' wellbeing is an issue of concern.

The WHO Europe estimates that there is a high and increasing rate of mental and behavioral health problems (depression, anxiety, excessive irritability, frustration) among 15-19-year-olds at population level, with some of the highest suicide rates in the world, which makes self-harm cases in this age group an important public health problem in Europe (WHO, 2018). The European Mental Health Action Plan, endorsed by all 53 Member States of the WHO European Region, recognizes the importance of resilience for young people's mental wellbeing as an essential determinant of mental health later in life. This is further addressed in the European Child & Adolescent Health Strategy 2015–2020, which highlights the need to strengthen protective factors in schools, homes and local communities and improve the quality of mental health care for children and adolescents.

It is a well-researched issue that VET systems tend to attract more students from social risk groups. This requires additional attention on wellbeing promotion in VET institutions due to higher rates of disruptive behaviour, poor student engagement and low motivation for learning. However, EU VET providers report limited capacity to provide effective support to students experiencing mild to moderate levels of psychological distress due to adverse fiscal, familial, social and school situations. What could prevent them from mental distress and risk behaviors is social-emotional learning (OECD, 2019), which has been shown to improve VET learners' social-emotional functioning and academic performance. Yet, for the majority of them, building social-emotional skills remains a matter of luck, depending on whether this is a priority for their teacher and school (Study on Social & Emotional Skills, OECD, 2018).

Thus, StayWell project sets the overall aim to develop an innovative web learning approach for advancing and sustaining VET learners' wellbeing and mental health through the acquisition of social-emotional skills that would help them study effectively, master their life and enter the job market.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- ~To provide VET learners, teachers and community with a thorough understanding of the factors affecting and skills favouring students' wellbeing through the development of a pioneering 4-pillar mapping frame of wellbeing;
- ~To foster VET learners to get aware, verify and continuously improve their level of psychological, cognitive, social and physical wellbeing through the development of a new to date approach for self-reflect upon the skills, which could help them improve their wellbeing and mental health;
- ~To boost and sustain VET learners' wellbeing skills through the creation of a virtual challenge-based learning environment to promote wellbeing practices at school;
- ~To enrich VET teachers' pedagogical approaches related to challenge-based learning and wellbeing promotion in the classroom through the elaboration of a full-cycle navigation tool to support them in the application, adaptation and transferability of the project innovative web approach.

TARGET GROUPS

- 1.Secondary VET: learners; teachers, educators, trainers and professionals; psychologists and leaders
- 2.Representatives of organisations promoting mental health and wellbeing in secondary VET
- 3.Public bodies involved in secondary VET

StayWell innovative approach will comprise:

O1: Wellbeing Mapping Frame providing a thorough understanding of the factors affecting and skills favouring students' wellbeing shaped in a pioneering 4-pillar frame.

O2: Wellbeing Skillbox opening up VET learners' minds about the importance of their mental health and wellbeing and fostering them to discover and continuously improve the skills, which could help them improve their psychological, cognitive, social and physical wellbeing.

O3: Digital Wellbeing Lab creating a virtual challenge-based learning environment for boosting and sustaining VET learners' wellbeing skills through collaborative work and guided discovery in the classroom.

O4: Digital Wellbeing Lab Navigation Guide equipping VET teachers with a full-cycle navigation tool to apply, adapt and transfer the project innovative web approach.

To ensure visibility and encourage wider uptake of project IOs there will be held:

+Small-scale Conferences in the UK, BG, GR, TR and SI

+Speak Up Event in Brussels

+Final Conference in LT

StayWell project will result in raising the issue about the importance of tackling students' health risk behaviours in VET schools, thus contributing to the creation of a favourable environment in Europe for developing, nurturing and sustaining VET learners' wellbeing.

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