

# **Participation of Young People with Mental Health Issues**

Second Peer Learning Seminar

**Education, Social Media and Games and  
Mental Health First Aid**

Helsinki, Finland

7-9 June 2017

This report is a summary of the second seminar in the series *EU Peer Learning Seminars on the Participation of Young People with Mental Health Issues*. The report is written by Y en Mai (Finnish Youth Research Network), under the supervision of Seija Astala (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture) and Elina Marjam aki (Finnish Association for Mental Health). The report was completed on 28 August 2017.

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## Executive Summary

The second seminar in the series *Peer Learning Seminars on the Participation of Young People with Mental Health Issues* took place in Helsinki (Finland) from 7 to 9 June 2017. The seminar continued the discussion started in the previous seminar held in Amsterdam (Netherlands) with a focus on **Education, Social Media and Games** and **Mental Health First Aid**. The aim was to strengthen the structures that support mental wellbeing and to increase social awareness of mental health promotion. The seminar had participants from Estonia, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom/Scotland, as well as one representative from the European Commission.

Under the theme **Education**, the seminar explored the training programmes of youth workers in both formal and informal environments. Many presentations stressed the importance of providing students of youth work with education on the promotion of mental wellbeing and the importance of strengthening the role of the professionals in decreasing fears and stigmas related to mental illnesses. The final recommendations encouraged to increase resources and support for youth workers in order to ensure that all of them have access to education on mental health promotion.

Under the theme **Social Media and Games**, the seminar looked at the opportunities that new technologies have to offer in the area of mental health promotion. The presentations introduced media channels and online applications that strengthen youth mental health for example by addressing school violence and improving inclusion. The final recommendations included introduction of media literacy into the education of youth workers and consultation of young people throughout the process of developing online services for the youth.

Under the theme **Mental Health First Aid**, the seminar discussed the variations of the programme Mental Health First Aid. In particular, the seminar participants looked at how this programme has been implemented in the participating countries and how it has been modified to meet the needs of different professionals. The seminar also presented a crisis training model for youth workers. The final recommendations aimed at training youth workers for crisis preparedness, increasing the visibility of Mental Health First Aid, and using creative means when training young people.

The structure of the seminar was as follows:

7 June 2017: Opening addresses and presentations on Mental Health Policy, Education, Social Media and Games, and Mental Health First Aid

8 June 2017: Workshops on Creative Youth Work, Youth Inclusion, Peer-to-peer Learning, Education, Social Media and Games, and Mental Health First Aid

9 June 2017: Discussion of recommendations

## Programme

### Wednesday 7 June 2017

The first day of the seminar provided a general introduction into the main themes of the seminar. The day was structured into two sections: Opening Remarks and Presentations.

#### Opening Remarks and Addresses

The opening remarks were given by **Seija Astala**, Senior Ministerial Adviser from the *Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture* and **Christie Stiphout** Senior Policy Adviser from *the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport of the Netherlands*. Christie Stiphout introduced the seminar participants to the background and objectives of the peer learning seminar. The aim of the seminar was to strengthen the participation of young people with mental health issues in society and deconstruct the stigma attached to mental health problems. In particular, the purpose of the peer learning seminar was to open a space for collaboration and bring together youth workers and mental health experts to build strategies for future youth work and youth policy.

Following this introduction, **Seija Astala** stressed the important role of the promotion of mental health of young people. She pointed out that one of the key priorities in the draft for a national programme for youth work and youth policy is to create a more cohesive service model for the youth, so that young people with mental health issues can be identified and provided with appropriate support services. She explained the choice of themes for the seminar, which signifies an investment in the training of youth workers and others working closely with the youth – both through the official education system and through non-formal learning contexts. She urged the seminar participants to come up with recommendations that could contribute to achieving increased participation of young people with mental health problems in society, education, and the labour market.

**Michalis Moschovakos**, Policy Officer from *Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Youth, Volunteer Solidarity and Traineeships Office*, delivered a brief address on behalf of the European Commission. He emphasised the importance of increasing the social inclusion of the youth and helping young people develop their talents and self-esteem, noting that youth work has an important role in achieving these goals. At EU level, programmes and policies are shaped in accordance with evidence provided by research and youth work. He stressed that cooperation between different sectors is necessary for the development of youth policies, and the lessons learned in the seminar will help to shape these policies and programmes in the near future.

#### Presentations of Main Themes

Directly following these opening remarks, the main themes of the seminar were discussed in four presentations given by experts in their respective fields. These presentations provided a background overview and examples of mental health youth work in the following areas: **Mental Health Policy, Education, Social Media and Games**, and **Mental Health First Aid**. After each presentation, the seminar participants engaged in a short discussion.

On **Mental Health Policy**: **Kristian Wahlbeck**, Development Director of the *Finnish Association for Mental Health*, gave an overview of the policies on mental health and introduced the EU compass for future actions. Dr. Wahlbeck stressed that mental health is shaped early in life, and therefore policies aiming at prevention need to tackle the problem in early childhood. He introduced the Mental Health in All Policies approach (MHAP), which takes into account all policies that have an impact on the

determinants of mental health. Dr. Wahlbeck discussed the EU Framework for Actions on Mental Health and Wellbeing, which stresses intervention in all stages of life and through multisectoral collaboration, and the European Pillar of Social Rights, which emphasises children's right to health care and early childhood education and care. More details on the MHiAP, the EU Framework for Actions on Mental Health and Wellbeing, and the European Pillar of Social Rights can be found in the Appendices.

**On Education:** Principal Lecturer **Eeva Sinisalo-Juha** introduced the degree programmes in youth work available at *HUMAK University of Applied Sciences* (Finland) that aim to provide future youth workers with education on mental health issues, for example. Preventive work is an essential element in these study modules included in the degree programme. The role of preventive activities in the promotion of mental health is stressed. The study modules have received positive feedback from both lecturers and students; however, some areas could be further developed to address students' needs, including the transition to working life, the skills to cope with burnout during studies, feelings of insufficiency, and training to improve stress tolerance. The presentation was followed by a fruitful discussion. The seminar participants expressed concerns about the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical working skills, and emphasised the need to increase understanding on different social issues that affect the youth. In addition, one participant suggested that youth workers should not be afraid of stepping out of their professional role and expressing their personal feelings when working with young people. The participant believes this would facilitate the youth workers' work by establishing a psychologically safe environment for the youth and, by building trust, reducing psychological resistance towards youth workers.

**On Social Media and Games:** Researcher **Mikko Meriläinen** from the *University of Helsinki* (Finland) discussed the positive aspects of social media and online community in the formation of young people's mental health. Meriläinen challenged the negative assumption attached to the use of social media while providing research evidence showing how online communities can offer safety, peer support, comfort and easy ways of communication for young people. These benefits, in turn, can help young people alleviate loneliness, deal with social anxiety, and provide opportunities for experimenting with different identities and roles. Meriläinen argued that social media can provide a means for youth workers to reach out to invisible vulnerable youth, urging youth workers to reconsider the role of social media in their mental health work.

**On Mental Health First Aid:** **Satu Raappana**, Manager of Online Services from the *Finnish Association for Mental Health*, introduced the Finnish drama series *Sekasin* [Mental], featuring four teenagers who are locked up in a mental institution. Developed by the Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE, the drama series was part of a social media campaign in Finland that aimed to raise public awareness of mental health issues and break the silence. Social media actors, such as bloggers and vloggers, joined the campaign and the public discussion by sharing their own mental health challenges. Through the cooperation of several Finnish NGOs, a free 24/7 online chat service, also named *Sekasin*, was opened for one week during the campaign. The chat service was aimed at teenagers who needed support with their mental health issues, such as depression, loneliness, suicidal ideation, and relationship problems. The chat service was a huge success and revealed a need for a new low-threshold national service for young people. This led to an idea of opening a permanent chat service for young people in Finland. A national *Sekasin* chat was opened the following January. On the *Sekasin* chat, the youth can talk to professionals or specially-trained adult volunteers. Overall, the seminar participants expressed positive reactions to the campaign, although some were worried that the drama series may reinforce stereotypes about the youth with mental health problems. In the ensuing discussion, the seminar participants acknowledged the role of social media and youth participation in the promotion of mental health work,

and some shared similar experiences of working with young people to address problems peculiar to youth.

## Thursday 8 June 2017

The second day of the seminar began with a presentation on the negative impacts of loneliness, which was followed by six workshops. After the workshops, the seminar participants were separated randomly into small groups to share ideas and discuss what they had learned from the workshops. The recommendations drawn from each workshop were presented on the last seminar day (Friday 9 June 2017).

### Presentation: "Does it hurt to be lonely"

Associate Professor **Niina Junttila** from the *University of Turku* (Finland) discussed one of her on-going research projects in which she interviews children, adolescents and parents about loneliness. Her findings show that experiences of loneliness at a young age can predict loneliness in adolescence, and that loneliness is related to other psychiatric symptoms such as anxiety, depression, social delinquency and suicidality. In particular, loneliness can lead to lower resilience, self-destructive attributes, cognitive distortion, and feelings of losing control. The actions of those suffering from loneliness can be interpreted as strange, aggressive and compulsive. This can result in them being further ostracised from social groups. Niina Junttila suggested a number of interventions to reduce loneliness: these aim at enhancing social support, increasing opportunities for social contacts, and addressing maladaptive social cognition in lonely people. She concluded that having emotional intimacy can improve resilience and social cognition in young children.

In the discussion that followed, the seminar participants raised questions on the ability of teachers to recognise students suffering from loneliness, given that these students can hide their feelings and maintain good academic performance. This suggests that training teachers to be able to recognise the signs of loneliness and depression in their students would be necessary. The idea that suffering caused by loneliness needs to be justified by medical evidence was criticised by one participant, who asserted that loneliness should be seen as a legitimate emotion in itself. It was also pointed out that youth workers can play a significant role in reducing the loneliness of young people also by enhancing the friendships of young people and teaching them socio-emotional skills. Another participant noted that in Scotland, social prescription is used by many doctors who recognise that loneliness cannot be solved by medical intervention, but rather by engaging the patients in social and community groups.

## Workshops

### Workshop: Creativity in Socially Empowering Youth Work

This workshop was led by **Ursula Hallas** and **Sanni Sihvola** from *FinFami Space Project* (Finland), who have experience of working with young people aged between 16 and 29. Their work involves teaching young people mentalisation skills through meditative exercises that connect the body and the mind. Mentalisation refers to the ability of being aware of one's own emotion as well as that of others. Mentalisation exercises aim to help young people express their creativity and artistic potential, build self-confidence, and establish social connection.

The seminar participants engaged in two brief mentalisation exercises. The exercises involved using imagination to establish a connection between the mind and the body. While most participants seemed

engaged in the exercises, some expressed slight resistance. After these exercises, the participants were asked to draw on a large piece of paper the shapes and images that came to their minds.

### Workshop: Inclusion

The two speakers of this workshop, **Amy Woodhouse** (Scotland) and **Peter Ritsema** (Netherlands), discussed different aspects of inclusion of children and young people.

**Amy Woodhouse**, Head of Policy of *Children in Scotland*, discussed the importance of including young people in the decision-making process related to mental health issues. The data gathered in the consultation work of *Children of Scotland* shows that inclusion can be enhanced through a commitment to listen to and act on what young people say, and through tailoring different approaches based on the age and abilities of each individual. Amy Woodhouse briefly introduced the work of Children in Scotland; one of the main goals of this organisation is to make the national legislation more inclusive and to take into greater account the wellbeing of young people and children. She asked the seminar participants to consider the different factors that hinder the inclusion of young people, different ways to overcome such barriers, and the tools and resources that can be shared and learned in the workshop.

**Peter Ritsema** from *Youth Work Rotterdam* claimed that a significant aspect of inclusion is employment, as it provides a channel for the youth to contribute to society in a practical and meaningful way. Using a short film, he introduced his own workshop in which he trained and employed young people coming from difficult circumstances (e.g. homeless). The aim was to offer these young people an opportunity to experience work as a “normal activity”, to participate in society in a meaningful way, to cultivate a sense of self-worth, and to engender empowerment. Commenting on the film, some participants contended that youth workers need to consider the vulnerability of the youth and to ensure that their privacy is protected and respected.

### Workshop: Peer-to-Peer Learning

The workshop had three presentations by *Migrant Youth Helsinki Project* (Finland), *Dutch Youth Council* (Netherlands), and *Youth Mental Health Association YEESI* (Finland).

**Kirsti Kallansalo** introduced the *Migrant Youth Helsinki Project*, a five-year project started in 2016 aiming to improve the position of young migrants in the areas of working life, education and social environment. This project led to the establishment of Buddy Café, a learning programme that aims to increase cultural skills of young people and to build learning communities. The goal of the project is to get to the root of the problem of dropping out of school and unemployment among the Finnish migrant youth by increasing the participation of these children at schools and in after-school activities. In this programme, positive action is taken already at the beginning of a school career, for example in the first and second grades. The aim is to prevent children from dropping out of school already at a young age. Older students (8th and 9th graders) are involved as mentors to these 1st and 2nd graders, and their task is to help their young peers with school work. Inclusion works both for older and for younger pupils. Buddy Café has received positive feedback from the young people involved.

**Paul Gelissen** and **David Mulder** discussed their work in the *Dutch Youth Council*, an organisation that works with a diverse group of young people to improve youth mental health and the Dutch mental healthcare system. The aim of the organisation is to turn personal experiences into a collective representation that includes the experiences of young people with different backgrounds and social contexts, and through that to make a difference in the healthcare system. Peer learning allows each member of the organisation to share their experiences of mental health issues and the healthcare system, to exchange ideas, and to develop an effective plan to approach policy makers.

**Annika Jouhki, Vilma Mankonen** and **Santtu Silventoinen** introduced the work of *YEESI*, a mental health association in Finland for all young people aged from 13 to 29. YEESI focuses on the positive aspect of mental health, with the objective of increasing the social awareness of mental wellbeing among young people. YEESI-points have been established in upper secondary schools as wellbeing centres where young people can hang out and organise activities for each other. The aim is to promote mental health, school participation and social inclusion, to eliminate discrimination among students, and to create a space that is open for all young people.

### Workshop: Education

The workshop consisted of eight presentations given by participants from Finland, Greece, Ireland, Malta and the Netherlands.

**Rosemary Scott** from the *National Youth Council of Ireland* introduced three training activities (Youth Mental Health Signposting Tool, Mental Health First Aid Training, and Sligo Community Training Center). These activities aim to increase knowledge and to provide empowerment and skills for youth workers when dealing with mental health issues. These activities have received positive feedback from those who have participated in the project.

**Panagiota Karkaletsis** from the *Greek Ministry of Education* introduced the *Comenius Regio European Programme*, implemented in Greece and Cyprus, which aims to tackle school violence and improve the quality of school life. This project has led to the implementation of a peer-to-peer education pilot programme, in which 240 student-mentors are trained to operate as mediators and conciliators who can alert and guide their peers on issues related to school violence and cyber-bullying.

**Bryan Magro** from *Youth Inc.* (Malta) described the work of Youth Inc. as a 'second chance' education programme for young people aged from 16 to 21 who have completed their upper secondary education. The programme aims to help young people achieve independence, cultivate self-esteem, and develop skills useful for future employment. The speaker stressed the importance of constructing the learning environment as a safe space for young people to get in touch with their vulnerability and disconnectedness which later will enable them to build connections and friendships. A safe space for learning is described as a welcoming atmosphere in which young people are offered unconditional acceptance and opportunities to grow and experience genuine love.

**Erkki Ukkola, Nadja Hynninen** and **Rasmus Ojala** described the work of *East-Helsinki Clubhouse* (Finland), a community created for people between the ages of 18 and 65 who are recovering from mental illness. The community offers peer support and personal guidance to help members enhance studying-related skills and choose the right vocational path. East-Helsinki Clubhouse also cooperates with schools in order to prevent students who suffer from mental health challenges from dropping out. These students are encouraged to continue their studies with the help of the clubhouse community.

**Kathryn Wall** from *Carlow Regional Youth Services* (Ireland) gave a presentation on building resilience of youth workers in order to support their mental health. As the nature of youth work is demanding and stressful, it is important for youth workers to develop self-awareness, emotional literacy and empathy, while maintaining a social support system. Kathryn Wall introduced the Friends Programme, which aims to reduce anxiety and develop emotional wellbeing of individuals from different age groups. In particular, the Friends Programme intended for adults can be utilised to help youth workers build resilience and strengthen their work ethics and support networks.

**Heidi Odell** from *Preventiimi/HUMAK University of Applied Studies* (Finland) gave a presentation on a web-based further training programme for youth workers. The web-based training programme is easily accessible and cost-effective, which benefits both the participants and the organisers. The training is designed to facilitate the shift in levels of expertise in youth work, from recognising mental health and substance abuse issues as part of youth work to becoming familiar with and further developing processes and services in early prevention. The training programme is a joint effort of *Preventiimi* of *HUMAK* and the Finnish Association for Mental Health. The programme has received very positive feedback from its participants.

**Hanna Hänninen** and **Iida Toikka-Sinivuori** from *Youth Work Riihimäki* (Finland) emphasised the significance of teaching mental health as a skill to young people. The two speakers used a set of charts developed by the Finnish Association for Mental Health to demonstrate the different aspects of living that affect mental wellbeing (eating habits, sleep/rest, personal relationships, personal values, exercise/activities and hobbies/creativity) and the various ways in which an individual can cope with stress and negative feelings.

**Monika van Boheemen** from *Scouting Netherlands* introduced the work of the organisation, which offers young children guidance to develop skills and establish social connections. The organisation also aims to tackle more complex problems that affect children aged 12 and older, such as anorexia, depression and suicidal ideation.

### Workshop: Social Media and Games

The workshop consisted of eight presentations from five countries: Estonia, Finland, Greece, Ireland and Scotland.

**Daniel Soomer** from *Peaasi* (Estonia) introduced the web portal *peaasi.ee* intended for young people and those who work with the youth. The website provides information on mental health, online counselling services, interactive self-help tools, and cognitive training exercises. It also has a support forum moderated by counselling experts, providing a platform for discussion on issues related to mental health disorders.

**Trevor Lakey** from *NHS Glasgow and Clyde* (Scotland) introduced the project *Aye Mind*, which provides digital resources for young people and professionals who work with young people. The speaker emphasised the need for youth workers to improve their ability to use online technology in their work; however, certain organisational policies still hinder the use of online technology. One of the goals of *Aye Mind*, therefore, is to address organisational policies and infrastructure issues, and to offer digital training on mental health awareness and skills.

**Riikka Nurmi** from the *Finnish Association for Mental Health* introduced the application *Mun Mieli* [My Mind], which aims to strengthen the mental health of young children. Using the application, children answer questions related to their everyday life and receive feedback. The application, targeted at students between ages 7 and 15, gives the users an overview of their mental wellbeing and advice on what to do to improve it. The application allows teachers to see the general wellbeing of their class and to be alerted of bullying.

**Madge O'Callaghan** from *Saint Patrick's Mental Health Services* (Ireland) introduced *Walk in my shoes*, a mental health awareness and educational campaign that aims to promote mental health at schools and workplaces. The campaign includes several different activities, including educational videos for teachers, mindfulness lessons for young people, short-film competitions, a social media hashtag and a helpline for young people aged from 18 to 25.

**Athina Christopoulou** from the *Greek Ministry of Education* noted that the demand for mental health services in Greece has been increasing. She gave concrete examples of using technology to support youth inclusion. For instance, a network of counselling among university students has been developed, and social media has been used in schools and peer support groups.

**Sanna Aaltonen** from the *Finnish Youth Research Network* introduced the project PROMEQ [Inclusive Promotion of Health and Wellbeing], which aims to improve the effectiveness of health promotion and reduce inequality in health. The project uses an existing online platform (Heimo.co) to create an online community where peers support each other through online discussion moderated by youth workers. The PROMEQ team hopes this online discussion forum will improve the sense of social connection among young adults, increase empathy, and demonstrate to youth workers the potential of online and group activities.

**Fergus McMillan** from *LGBT Youth Scotland* introduced the campaign *Purple Friday*. The goal of the campaign is to raise awareness of the effects of discrimination on LGBTQ people and to raise funds to support the work of young LGBT activists. The campaign has proven to be a success, and it has received genuine support from the public community of Scotland, including the army, politicians and the mass media.

**Minna Berg** from the *University of Helsinki* (Finland) gave a presentation on the use of virtual technologies in education and youth work to facilitate Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). The core components of SEL include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship skills. Virtual reality headsets were available at the presentation so that the seminar participants could try out the learning method,

## Workshop: Mental Health First Aid

**Ritva Karila-Hietala** from the *Finnish Association for Mental Health* (Finland) introduced Young Mind First Aid, a course designed for individuals who work with children and adolescents aged between 7 and 18 either as professionals or through hobbies (e.g. running amateur athletics clubs or associations), as well as for parents who wish to receive information about the mental health of their children. The course aims to promote mental wellbeing by raising awareness of mental health issues and to encourage teachers and professionals to discuss mental health problems. The course addresses mental health disorders that affect children and young people, the challenges for mental wellbeing in everyday life, and difficult experiences in the lives of children and the youth.

**Evelien Wagemakers** from *GGZ Eindhoven*, a mental health institution in Netherlands, discussed the benefit of *Mental Health First Aid*, which helps to reduce stigma, decrease negative attitudes, and increase supportive behaviours towards individuals with mental health issues. This 12-hour course teaches participants to be able to recognise, offer help and find relevant information concerning what to do in a mental health crisis. The speaker stressed that a well-prepared adult who knows how to recognise and respond to someone in need can make a significant difference in a crisis situation.

**Daniela Calleja** from *Richmond Foundation* in Malta presented the Mental Health First Aid in Malta. In particular, she focused on the way the programme has been delivered as well as how it has been adapted to suit the needs of different professionals, such as fire rescue workers and Migrant offshore aid station workers. One of the strengths of the work in Malta is that they are able to implement the Australian programme without the need to translate the material.

**Maiju Haltia-Nurmi** from the *Finnish Youth Cooperation - Allianssi* discussed a national project that enhances youth workers' preparedness during a crisis. This project is based on the cooperation between youth work and regional crisis work of the Finnish Association for Mental Health. In 2016, a survey on crisis preparedness was conducted among youth workers, youth work directors and other professionals in the youth work sector, showing that the ability to handle crisis is the top educational need among these professionals. The survey participants reported a lack of crisis preparedness in youth work education programmes, and the majority agreed that there is a need for multi-professional cooperation during a crisis. The speaker recommended that there should be more comprehensive crisis planning in youth work, more visibility for the role of youth work, more investment in multi-professional cooperation, and re-evaluation of youth work education programmes.

## Friday 9 June 2017

The last day of the seminar began with a presentation by Aspa Foundation (Finland) on using drama to promote mental health awareness. Following this presentation, the seminar participants presented the recommendations that they had formulated in the workshops the previous day. Finally, representatives of each participating country discussed their achievements since the first seminar as well as their future plans.

### **Aspa Foundation and the Mintressi Project: #BOX drama and the story behind it**

**Aspa Foundation** showed a play made by young people, addressing the stigma attached to depression and other mental health issues. The play is a critique of categorisation, generalisation and labelling behaviours that restrict people within symbolic boxes, arguing that youth are not being recognised for who they are. The play compared depression with other chronic diseases, making remarks that depression should be seen as a medical condition rather than a state of mind. The play has been a success.

After the film, the seminar participants engaged in a discussion with the young adolescents starring in the play, many of whom have personal experiences of mental health issues. According to the actors, participation in the play has had a positive impact on their wellbeing. A long process of building trust has helped the actors to connect with other young people. The actors also believed that the performance can help raise social awareness of mental health issues. One seminar participant noted that the stigmatisation shown in the play is similar to his own experience, despite national differences, suggesting that the play has the potential to communicate the issue globally.

The discussion was followed by an activity: the seminar participants were invited to stand inside cardboard squares and to talk about how they felt while standing inside these “boxes”. The participants reported feeling awkward, uncomfortable and vulnerable. The purpose of the exercise was to demonstrate how labelling can have negative impact on mental wellbeing.

## **Recommendations**

### **Workshop: Creativity in Socially Empowering Youth Work**

The seminar participants agreed that creative methods using arts and drama as portrayed in the workshop can be used as a means to empower people. The recommendations in general aim at making these methods more accessible to those who partake:

- The methods should be accessible to all, irrespective of their social and economic capital.
- A safe environment needs to be created for the participants before the exercises begin.
- Instructions provided for the participants should be clear throughout the exercises.
- There should be enough time for the participants to process the methods and share their own individual stories.

### **Workshop: Inclusion**

The seminar participants agreed that inclusion has a positive impact on mental health of young people as it gives them control over their lives, builds self-esteem and resilience, and creates better service quality. Some participants contended that it is crucial to adjust the services to the true needs of the young people. This requires that youth workers listen to young people’s opinions and avoid assumptions

from a professional perspective. The recommendations aim at extending social inclusion to cover young people in different social positions:

- Discrimination should be challenged. The inclusion process should not exclude young people from minority groups (e.g. LGBT youth). This also means avoiding thinking of all young people's desires and needs as being the same.
- A sustainable inclusion process needs to be established. This requires a shared view of what meaningful participation entails.

### Workshop: Peer-to-Peer Learning

The seminar participants agreed that peer learning, which can happen at a very young age, can have a therapeutic effect for both parties. In particular, the process can empower young people by making them feel useful and socially included. The following recommendations aim to make the peer-learning process more effective:

- Peer-to-peer learning requires both freedom and responsibility. It is important that the peer-teacher has freedom in teaching, yet the parties still need to follow common rules and have a common goal.
- The motto is "to turn your baggage into toolkits," which means that the peer-teachers can use their own experiences with mental health issues in their teaching.
- Equality between the peer-teacher and peer-learner is necessary for an effective peer-to-peer learning.
- When planning a service for the youth, young people should be consulted throughout the process.

### Workshop: Education

The seminar participants agreed that accessibility is an important factor in education. In particular, peer-to-peer learning is a good example of low thresholds and collaboration, making education an environment of opportunities, love and support for everyone.

The following recommendations aim at increasing the accessibility and quality of education of youth workers:

- There should be sufficient resources for the implementation of the next EU Youth Strategy (post2018) in order to support and promote the development of cross-sectoral youth policy.
- Youth workers should take care of their own mental wellbeing and have the support when needed.
- When learning or teaching mental health related issues, the teaching should be practice-based and concrete.

## Workshop: Social media and games

The seminar participants agreed that social media channels and games can be used as effective tools to assist youth work and reach out to a large number of young people. However, the participants were concerned that some youth workers may resist the idea of using these technologies for their work, and while social media channels have great potential for online mental health intervention, they may also raise privacy concerns. The recommendations aim at resolving these concerns, stressing collaboration between different fields such as traditional youth work and formal education:

- Teachers and youth workers should be encouraged to use electronic devices in their work. A combination of both physical and online learning may be a good way to ease the transition.
- Critical thinking and media literacy should be included in youth workers' education to help them assist young people through social media and games.
- Schools should have access to high-speed internet to enable both teachers and students to use all types of materials. It is important to note that while this is common in some countries, in other countries internet access is not available in every school.
- Youth workers can utilise online channels, such as Google Play, Youtube, and Facebook to reach out to young people.
- There should be collaboration between research and youth work, human and technology, peers and professionals.
- When developing new applications and online channels for youth work, young people should be consulted and their feedback taken into consideration. Understanding of digital platforms can be increased by learning from young people.
- Online platforms that can direct young people to mental health services should be developed. The technologies available should also be used to identify the segment of youth in need of mental health services. In addition, tools should be developed to assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of the platforms.
- Organisations need to have clear principles which will guide them towards necessary actions and future developments.

## Workshop: Mental Health First Aid

The seminar participants agreed that the skills offered by courses on Mental Health First Aid and Young Mind First Aid, as well as courses on crisis-preparedness are important for youth workers. The consensus was that knowing what to do in a mental health crisis is as important as knowing Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). The recommendations aim at preparing youth workers for mental health crises and increasing public knowledge of mental health intervention through creative methods:

- Youth workers should develop clear protocols on what to do in crisis situations.

- There should be more governmental support to implement Mental Health First Aid across Europe. The aim is to increase public knowledge of mental health and offer people basic training to effectively handle a mental health crisis.
- More attention should be paid to positive identity building.
- There should be more visibility and creative methods to promote Mental Health First Aid. Social media and games can be useful in this respect.
- Young people should be included in the training process for Mental Health First Aid, as peers are in an ideal position to recognise the first signs of mental health problems. There is a Teen Mental Health First Aid course available in Australia and the first training course for trainers will soon take place in the Netherlands.

### **Actions since the previous seminar and future plans**

Towards the end of the seminar, the representatives of each participating country were asked to reflect on their work and achievements related to youth mental health.

In **Finland**, a new child policy programme is being drafted, in which mental health is one of the proposed key areas. A revised Youth Act has been in force since the beginning of 2017. There will be a major structural reform of healthcare and social welfare services by 2019.

In **Ireland**, Mental Health First Aid has been introduced and built on advocacy work. The country has also developed a database to share resources, to support services related to youth mental health, and to connect organisations. The International Mental Health Conference will take place in Dublin from 24 to 26 September 2017.

In **Greece**, a youth network has been established in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. The process is under way.

In **Malta**, there have been more opportunities for the youth to reach out to counselling services. Mental Health First Aid has been incorporated into the national training programme of all youth workers. Given the influx of Eastern European immigrants into the country, there is pressure to develop services that address the needs of young people originating from these particular communities.

In the **Netherlands**, a national working group has been established and partners for this group have been found.

In **Scotland**, the idea of having youth mental health task force, initiated by Ireland, has moved forward. New mental health strategies are being developed together with the commitment of having stakeholders come together in biannual meetings. On 14 November 2017, the country will hold a national conference on youth work and mental health.

## Next stop Rotterdam

Finally, Caroline Vink and Marja Valkestein from the Netherlands Youth Institute, project coordinators of the peer learning process on the Dutch side, gave a short presentation of the next and final step in the process, a seminar that will take place in Rotterdam in November 2017.

- › The peer learning process is made up of three seminars. The first seminar took place in Amsterdam in November 2016. It was aimed at setting the scene for the peer learning process, focusing on youth work, mental health and the involvement of young people. The most important message conveyed was that we should work towards youth-involved mental health and mental health-informed youth work. In order to reach this goal, the second seminar, as introduced in this report, focused on the missing link of educating youth workers and the role of social media. The main message of this meeting was 'educating professionals, peers and making the best of what social media has to offer'. In the last meeting in Rotterdam we will draw conclusions and look at mental health in all policies, especially focusing on the role of schools in relation to mental health, youth work and participation of young people. Finally, we will look at and work on the following messages and recommendations:
- › What does mental health in all policies bring to your own work and working together with other partners?
- › What does it bring to the debate in your country?
- › How does it contribute to better cooperation between different domains?
- › Recommendations at EU level: new inputs in the EU youth framework >2018
- › Dissemination of recommendations and good practices at all policy levels
- › Preparation in partnership with young people

## Conclusion

The second seminar in the series of Peer Learning Seminars on the Participation of Young People with Mental Health Issues, held in Helsinki (Finland), was informed by the values and lessons from the first seminar in Amsterdam (the Netherlands). The first seminar successfully established the importance of having multi-sectoral collaboration to support youth mental health. The second seminar expanded on this collaboration theme, focusing on the education of youth workers, the role of social media, and different methods to bring mental health first aid to public awareness.

The presentations established the following points:

1. Youth work can benefit from new and creative methods. Social media, interactive exercises and arts are a few of the many domains through which youth workers can approach the youth in need of mental health support and improve social awareness of mental wellbeing.
2. There is a need for youth workers to receive training on mental health promotion and on the possibilities of enhancing young people's mental wellbeing and mental health skills through youth work. Training on crisis preparedness is extremely important for youth workers, who can use these skills and knowledge to help young people during crisis situations and to guide young people towards appropriate services.
3. Media literacy and critical thinking should be incorporated into the education and training programmes of youth workers and other professionals who work with young people. Some youth work communities need increased funding in order to be on equal footing in terms of resources, and in order to ensure sufficient training. In general, there should be more resources to support the mental wellbeing of youth workers.
4. Youth inclusion is vital for the process of developing new services for youth mental health. This means that young people should be consulted throughout the process, and their feedback should play an important role in shaping the services created for the youth.
5. Peer-to-peer learning is an effective way to share knowledge and empower those who are involved in the process. Peer learning can benefit young children by creating social attachment and responsibility from a young age, and benefit experts by creating a favourable environment for the exchange of professional ideas from different fields.
6. It is important to note that young people are not a homogenous group. Instead, young people from different backgrounds and communities are exposed to different problems and have different needs. A thorough understanding of the social contexts that affect a given youth community is important for the process of developing appropriate services for youth in that particular region. In this respect, an investment in social research at EU level is necessary.

Building on these findings, the next seminar aims to bring forth wider EU cooperation and produce new inputs to guide future EU youth policy. The seminar will take place in Rotterdam (the Netherlands) from 29 November to 1 December 2017.

## Appendices

### Scales or indicator systems used by participants in the seminar

- WEMWBS: Warwick Edinburg Mental Wellbeing Scale
- MZQ: Mentalisation skills Measure
- NEL: Netherlands Empowerment List
- SPENCE Scale: Anxiety Scale

### Mental Health in All Policies (MHiAP)

*Mental Health in All Policies* is an approach to public policies across sectors that systematically takes into account the health implications of decisions, seeks synergies, and aims to avoid harmful health impacts in order to improve health equity. MHiAP provides a framework for regulation and practical tools that combine health, social and equity goals with economic development, and manages conflicts of interest transparently. More details can be found on [www.mentalhealthandwellbeing.eu](http://www.mentalhealthandwellbeing.eu).

### EU Framework for Action on Mental Health and Wellbeing

Principle 1. Adopting a public mental health approach emphasising early intervention, also addressing promotion, prevention and treatment in all stages of life (with a particular emphasis on stages before adulthood)

Principle 2. Incorporating an all-government, multi-sectoral approach

Principle 3. Promoting a human rights-based approach, preventing stigmatisation, discrimination and social exclusion

Principle 4. Developing quality-based, recovery-oriented, socially inclusive and community-based approaches

Principle 5. Empowering and involving patients, families and their organisations

Principle 6. Ensuring that policy and actions are supported by evidence-based science and knowledge of good practices

### The European Pillar of Social Rights

- The right to healthcare
- The right to early childhood education
- The right to social protection regardless of employment status