



Press Release

Preventing addictions in youth: a family- and school- centered approach in the context of the ADD-freeTraining European project

February 10, 2021 - Much as young people consider themselves healthy, they are more prone to risk behaviors than adults. The World Health Organization highlights that the prevalence rates of alcohol consumption are higher among 15–19-year-olds in the European Region. Significantly high rates are also seen in tobacco use among young people as well. Evidence from EUROSTAT highlights that 8 out of 10 young people use computers on a daily basis.

The ADD-freeTraining project, in accordance with the priorities of the EU Youth Strategy of 2019-2027, supports the health and well-being of young people. It is a three-year project (01/11/2019- 31/10/2022), funded by the ERASMUS+ Program of the European Union, aiming to develop integrated educational tools for the prevention of smoking, alcohol and internet addictions among children and adolescents through a family and school oriented approach.

Six partners facing common challenges in youth addictions will work towards achieving the objectives of the project: Bulgaria Youth Prevention (Bulgaria), Institut društvenih znanosti "Ivo Pilar" (Croatia), CSI - Center for Social Innovation LTD (Cyprus), Idryma Ormylia, Prolepsis Institute (Greece) and University of Belgrade - Faculty of Medicine (Serbia).

The ADD-freeTraining project addresses alcohol, smoking and internet addictions in youth. Especially during the current COVID-19 pandemic projects such as ADD-freeTraining have an added value as the pandemic has caused unprecedented changes in the daily life of people and has presented with unique challenges for children and adolescents who seem to be more susceptible to addictions. Addictions as research indicates are at the rise during periods of lockdown with problematic Internet use standing at the top of the rank.

The ADD-freeTraining project recognizes the importance of prevention and especially the need to adopt a family- and school- centered approach to deal with addictions in childhood and adolescence a serious public health issue which threatens society. In November 2020, the project consortium achieved a mapping of the addiction prevention ecosystem completed through an extensive desktop research that was performed among 28 European countries. Focus groups were also performed in the consortium countries with parents and teachers. Results show that trainings about tobacco and alcohol are more usual in contrast with the trainings regarding problematic use of Internet which seem to be scarce. In addition to this, parents and teachers in all focus groups were mostly concerned about problematic Internet use since the use of the internet has escalated in recent years and knowledge concerning prevention and management especially among young people has yet to be fully systematized and dispersed. On the other side, it was revealed high ignorance concerning health issues related with overdrinking as well as new types of smoking, i.e. vapor and/or "nargile".

Effectively preventing and dealing with any kind of addiction in youth requires relevant and simultaneous actions by the family as well as the school since both constitute the main pillars for children's' socialization. Parents and teachers revealed during the focus groups going one step further, that collaboration between the family and the school, especially when dealing with addictions is crucial and essential.

For more information please visit ADD-freeTraining website at <https://addfree-training.eu/> or follow the ADD-freeTraining page on Facebook: facebook.com/ADDfreeTraining

