



Erasmus+ Programme

2014-2020

Key Action 2: Strategic Partnership Projects

Skills and Knowledge Exchange Project for Drug and Alcohol Helplines (SKEPDAH)

Project Agreement No: 2016-1-IE01-KA202

SKEPDAH Project meets to talk about *New Psychoactive Substances and Helpline Work*

The Skills and Knowledge Exchange Project for Drug and Alcohol Helplines (SKEPDAH) was designed as a way for Drug and Alcohol Helplines to learn from each other and to exchange experience in a sustainable manner. This project is funded by the European programme for education, training, youth and sport (Erasmus +). It is a Key Action 2 Partnership Project, which focuses on Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices. The project has been made possible with the funding of the Irish National Agency, Léargas and is running from January 2017 to August 2018.

The idea for this project was born from a survey of drug helplines in early 2015 when participants were asked what topics they felt they needed further insights and training on. This was followed up by a second more detailed survey in December 2015 from which three topics of interest emerged. It was decided that this project would focus on meeting the needs of Drug and Alcohol Helplines by addressing these three topics and that the best way to do that was for us to work during the project to design curriculae for Helplines on each of the three topics that could be used, reused and shared into the future.

During the life of the project, there will be three Transnational Partner meetings during which information, experience and resources will be shared and used to develop a draft curriculum on each of the topics. These curriculae will then be trialed or used within our individual services to help inform training and support needs for our staff and any learnings will be fed back to inform that final drafts.

The most recent meeting was the second Transnational Learning Exchange Partner Meeting which was held on September 25th and 26th in Frankfurt, Germany, at the Basis e.V. drug service offices. The topic for the two-day meeting was "New Psychoactive Substances and Helpline work". All nine partner services were in attendance and we were fortunate to have several expert speakers on the topic of New Psychoactive Substances in attendance as they are already partners in this project.

The agenda for the two-day meeting was designed to maximise the learning exchange opportunities while also working towards the goal of creating a curriculum for training on this topic. We started with a presentation from each partner on their services but also on how the New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) features in each organization. Some services had more experience than others in dealing with it but also we asked the question whether there are issues around our confidence in dealing with queries about NPS and whether people using NPS are more likely to seek information and support from user fora and other online resources than to call a helpline.

Through inputs and workshops, we worked to pool our knowledge to create a list of topics that should be covered in a curriculum on the topic of NPS and Helpline Work by the end of the two-day meeting. We also shared useful resources on the topic and looked at ways of addressing gaps in our skills, knowledge or confidence on the topic.

Amidst the work on the curriculum there was lots of information exchanged on the topic of NPS. In general, there was an acknowledgement that as it is an ever-evolving entity our knowledge around exact substances and also around long term effects of new substances being used in new ways will always have a limit. It is of course important for us to stay as informed as possible and that can be achieved by visiting user fora as well as the many useful drug information websites such as erowid.org, legal-high-inhaltstoffe.de; tripsit.me; emcdda.europa.eu; vitalinfo.org.uk; wearetheloop.org; globaldrugsurvey.com; drugwheel.com; drugwise.org.uk neptune-clinical-guidance.co.uk; and Dundee University Centre for Excellence in NPS Research. Talked also about nightlife projects such as checkit.wien; safernightlife.org; drugsmeter.com; energycontrol.org; saferparty.ch; ecstasydata.org (with a caution not to over-rely on the exact information such as presuming that your tablet is exactly the same as being discussed).

There was much useful discussion on the value of teamwork, supervision, peer support and shared responsibilities of all helpline staff to try their best to stay informed, rather than relying on an in-house NPS expert.

By the end of the two day meeting a draft curriculum had been prepared. This outlines what is best to include in Helpline workers training. This curriculum has to be completed in the weeks following the meeting and then shared across the partnership. Following this, some partners will elect to engage in training with their Helpline workers with reference to this curriculum and will feedback any learnings back to the partners. Key learnings and the final curriculae will be disseminated throughout the project through online resources and at the Dissemination meeting near the end of the project.

Partners in this project are:

The HSE Drugs & Alcohol Helpline (Ireland); De DrugLijn, VAD (Belgium); Fracarita Bulgaria, National Drugs, Alcohol and Gambling Helpline (Bulgaria); SICAD (Portugal); PERSEAS (Cyprus); RUStelefonen (Norway); Drugs Infolijn, Trimbos Instituut (The Netherlands); Basis e.V. (Germany) and the Training Exchange Ltd (UK).

The third Transnational Learning Exchange Meeting will be held in Brussels in Belgium in February 2018. At this two-day meeting, we will focus on Topic 3: *Drug and Alcohol Helplines and Mental Health/Dual Diagnosis*. Once again, we will refer to the Learning Outcomes that were noted in the survey at the start of the project and direct the agenda and the goals for the meeting based on that. Our final meeting of the project will be the Dissemination Meeting which will be held in June 2018 in Cyprus.

As an end result, these curriculae for continued vocational education and training for Helpline workers will be disseminated online and can be used freely by other Drug and Alcohol Helplines as well as similar services in Europe and beyond.

To follow are weblinks to the organizations involved in this project:

Erasmus + : https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/node_en

FESAT: <http://www.fesat.org/en/>

Drugs/HIV Helpline: <http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/5/addiction/drugshivhelpline/>

VAD: <http://www.vad.be/>

De DrugLijn: <https://www.druglijn.be/>
Fracarita Bulgaria: <http://www.solidarnost-bg.org/en/>
National Drugs, Alcohol and Gambling Helpline: <http://www.drugsinfo-bg.org/en/>
SICAD: <http://www.sicad.pt/pt/Paginas/default.aspx>
PERSEAS: <https://www.facebook.com/perseas.center/>
RUStelefonen: <http://www.rustelefonen.no/>
Drugs Infolijn: <https://www.drugsinfo.nl/publiek>
Trimbos Instituut: <https://www.trimbos.org/>
Basis eV. : <http://www.basis-ev.eu/>
The Training Exchange Ltd: <http://www.trainingexchange.org.uk/>



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