



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 Partners meet to discuss *Dual Diagnosis (Mental Health issues and drug misuse) 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 were three Transnational Partner meetings during which information, experience and resources were shared and used to develop a curriculum on each of the topics. These curriculae will then be brought home and used as reference material in our individual services to help inform training and support needs for our staff. Any learnings were then fed back to inform final drafts.

The most recent meeting was the third Transnational Learning Exchange Partner Meeting which was held on Feb 19th and 20th in Brussels, Belgium at the De Druglijn /VAD offices. The topic for the two-day meeting was "Dual Diagnosis and Helpline work". All nine partner services were in attendance and we were fortunate to have an expert speaker on the topic from Ireland, Philip James in attendance too.

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



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this topic. We started with a presentation from each partner on their services and the challenges they face in their contact with service users who have diagnosed and undiagnosed mental health issues and are also using drugs or alcohol. This is a topic that impacts on all helplines, so there was a lot of similar experience and discussion around challenges. Perhaps the greatest distinction to emerge was the difference in services within the countries, were some helpline can refer callers directly to specialist services and others do not seem to have adequate services available. There was also discussion around that fact that for many a formal diagnosis cannot be made while they are actively using drugs, a fact that in some ways keeps that drug user in a self-medicating cycle.

Mr Philip James is a Clinical Nurse Specialist who runs an Adolescent Addiction Service in Ireland. He did a presentation for the partners on Dual Diagnosis, bringing particular focus to the topics complexities.

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 co-existing substance use and mental health issues 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 resources and best practice. There was consensus on the fact that as we are helplines and not medical services, we cannot diagnose people. We can offer support, psycho-education etc but cannot diagnose.

As with our previous meetings, there was much useful discussion on the value of teamwork, supervision, peer support and shared responsibilities of all helpline staff, but also an added not about the importance of networks and cooperative work with colleagues in disciplines such as mental health.

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); RUS telefonen (Norway); Drugs Infolijn, Trimbos Instituut (The Netherlands); Basis e.V. (Germany) and the Training Exchange Ltd (UK).



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The final meeting of this project will be the dissemination meeting which will be held in Cyprus on June 18th and 19th 2018. Much of this meeting has yet to be planned, but we anticipate that there will be a webinar or streamed version of the event that can be viewed and shared. Also, but that point all three curriculae will have been completed and be ready to share with anyone what would find them useful. If you would like to find out more about this project, please contact one of the project partners or visit www.fesat.org.

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/>

Léargas(The Irish National Agency): <https://leargas.ie/>



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