



ProWell

Protecting the mental wellbeing of our children during
and after public health emergencies

PRESS RELEASE



The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
[Project number: 2020-1-DE02-KA226-VET-008072]

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union





May 2022

Research findings of the ProWell project revealed that teachers in the EU are not adequately trained to support children's mental health during public health emergencies like the Covid-19 pandemic. Teachers report that they need mental health training programmes that will help them: identify mental health symptoms in children, recognise signs of abuse, acknowledge common mental health problems during emergencies (like anxiety and depression), learn how to build communication skills with both children and parents, receive practical guidance on how to support children and adolescents in emergencies and promote their wellbeing using digital tools.

The Covid-19 pandemic has imposed a paradigm shift to digital education in schools. National lockdowns and social distancing rules meant that teachers and students had to quickly adapt to distance teaching and learning methods. Teachers were called to incorporate digital teaching methods in their work without having adequate training and support. These public health emergency situation was associated with additional challenges for teachers like coping with the deterioration of children and adolescents' mental health commonly faced by students in public health crises.

The project ProWell aims to support this rapid change by developing digital educational tools to build competencies and provide the necessary knowledge to teachers and other educators mostly involved with children and adolescents e.g., sports coaches, recreational group leaders (dance teachers etc.), to better support children during and after adverse public health emergencies. These skills will be delivered through an innovative teaching approach and will be focused on children's mental health, wellbeing and competencies building. Overall, the training developed within the ProWell project will educate teachers on how to acknowledge mental health issues and promote students' wellbeing as well as support their own mental health (e.g., avoid burnout) when disruption of social structures becomes everyday practice.

The ProWell project is a two-year programme (01/03/2021 - 28/02/2023), funded by the ERASMUS+ Program of the European Union, designed to address the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on children's wellbeing. The projects' consortium is composed of 7 partners dedicated to supporting children and adolescents' mental during crises: Technische Universitaet Dresden, Germany (Project coordinator), Prolepsis Institute (Greece), Center for Social Innovation (Cyprus), Osengo (France), Institut Društvenih Znanosti Ivo Pilar (Croatia), Associazione Tages Onlus, (Italy) and University of Valencia Polibienestar (Spain).

In the first 10 months of project implementation, (01.03.2021 – 31.10.2021), the consortium achieved (i) a mapping of the existing training opportunities for teachers, (ii) a country specific literature review and (iii) focus groups with teachers and other educators in all partner countries to identify their needs on mental health education. Although the mapping revealed 174 mental health training programs implemented in Europe, teachers reported that they are not sufficiently trained to support children and adolescents during public health emergencies. Results from 14 focus groups the project conducted with teachers and other educators in 7 countries (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Croatia, Greece and Cyprus) showed that the Covid-19 pandemic has caused significant mental health challenges among students and teachers need specialised training to acknowledge at risk students, learn how best to support them and understand when to refer them to specialised services.

Completing this milestone is an important achievement for the consortium as it will guide the next steps and help us complete the project objectives. The ProWell project will develop an innovative training tailor made to teachers' needs that will be publicly available and will help them increase their knowledge, skills and competencies in promoting mental health of students during public health emergencies. For more information, please visit ProWell website at <https://prowell-project.com> or follow the ProWell page on Facebook: facebook.com/ProWell

