



National Report on help-desk Implementation

KMOP – Greece



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1. Introduction

This "**Lessons Learnt and Policy Recommendations**" report for school counselling desks has been developed in the framework of the "**REBOOT NOW – Prevention of Gender-Based Violence in Schools after Lockdown**", project no. 101049567, co-funded by the CERV programme of the European Commission. REBOOT NOW aims at supporting young people who have psychologically suffered because of the pandemic and may have fallen victims and/or witnesses of violence, while **raising awareness on teen-dating violence**.

More specifically,
the project aims to:

Support recovery of young people from difficulties that have arisen from measures against Covid-19 pandemic, in particular through positive actions that support their well-being and mental health.

Prevent and combat gender-based violence among young people by supporting their psychological well-being through an evidence-based replicable service, with their active engagement.

Create an itinerant counselling desk for the psychological recovery of students, school staff and families.

Build capacity of school staff and families in the prevention and identification of cases of teen dating violence and gender-based violence among young people.



The **project consortium** consists of **CESIE** (Italy), **KMOP** (Greece), **“Hope For Children” CRC Policy Center** (Cyprus), **ZRS Koper** (Slovenia), **ANIMUS Association Foundation** (Bulgaria) and **Fondazione Hallgarten-Franchetti Centro Studi Villa Montesca** (Italy).

This report presents the national implementation of the **itinerant counselling desk** in Piraeus, Greece, which was running in the period from October 2022 to June 2023, thanks to the work of KMOP with a local team of psychologists, in three junior high schools. Particularly, as a way to draft KMOP’s “lessons learnt”, this report will firstly present the different ways in which the “pilot” desk was implemented in Greece, adding some elements of evaluation based on the different levels of assessment which were created over the course of the project for the users’ feedback, service providers and supervisors’ view. Secondly, on the basis of the different experiences collected, the report will draft some recommendations for policy makers and other stakeholders willing to apply the REBOOT NOW itinerant counselling desk’s model in other contexts, thus ensuring the sustainability of the project.

2. The REBOOT NOW itinerant counseling desk

2.1 Idea and rationale

The COVID-19 pandemic started in 2020 has worsened social issues across the EU. Children in particular have suffered from disruptions in schooling, social isolation, prolonged periods in closed family settings and inaccessibility of support service (such as victim/mental health support), and have been affected in many ways: online and family violence, psychological distress, disrupted eating, sleep and hygiene habits, changes in behavior and lack of interest in schoolwork and in relationships, to name a few. Already-struggling young people from marginalized backgrounds (migrants, refugees, ethnic and religious minorities, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ youth etc.) were even at higher risk of psychologically suffering from the pandemic. In particular, because of the little to no social interactions during the COVID-19 period, except with the closer family or communication mediated by digital tools, "COVID-era teenagers" saw their social and emotional skills affected, in the key moment when first relationships with peers, even intimate ones, would begin.

Deriving from this, the REBOOT NOW project started from the idea to address these emerging challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic concerning children's wellbeing, mental health and safety in general, but particularly their increased exposure to gender-based violence (GBV) and the foreseeable difficulty to create safe/healthy relationships. In order to strengthen existing psychological support mechanisms in participant countries, the project has focused on the objective of preventing and addressing teen-dating violence by developing a practical and **concrete pilot intervention** in a form of itinerant counseling desks with online access point in elementary and secondary schools. Specifically, the REBOOT NOW itinerant counseling desks has targeted:



Children aged 10-14, including children from marginalized backgrounds as they have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 pandemic and related measures taken by governments. The choice to focus on children in early adolescence was made because in this critical age they initiate their first intimate relationships, thus raising awareness on gender equality may be more effective.



School staff and educating community, who can support young people in building healthy relationships far from GBV and restoring their wellbeing/sociality, while promptly responding to violence cases when occurring.



Families and caregivers, who have been put under pressure in multiple ways by Covid-19 measures and will thus particularly benefit from chances to cooperate with schools and to be supported in their parental role.

Before creating the national itinerant desks, in all partner countries representatives from the schools selected (including school directors, teachers and educators, representatives of students and families), public entities supporting the project and relevant stakeholders operating in the field of education or social services were invited to attend some "**national meetings**", aimed at analyzing each country context, building a common understanding around the need of supporting children's wellbeing and mental health in schools, with a particular attention to GBV, and at agreeing on the specificities that each desk would have been in each country. The result of these meetings was the signature of **6 Protocols of Cooperation**, gathering together all the parties involved at national level and defining the functioning, specific procedures and policies, including Child Safeguarding policies, as well as sustainability ideas for each itinerant desk.

In parallel, always to better frame the starting point of the REBOOT NOW action, partner organizations implemented also a **baseline data collection** among children from the participating schools, with the aim of gathering data about the feelings and emotions experienced during the pandemic, the needs they were facing, as well as the availability and eventual access to existing help services, in schools or outside, where these were already available. A specific **Comparative Baseline Data Collection** report was published in January 2023, analyzing all results collected in the implementing countries – available at [this link](#).



Also, part of the ignition phase was constituted by the recruitment of the "service providers", the professional figures who were employed in each desk. Namely, a minimum of three professionals (psychologists, pedagogists, social workers) per country were recruited and received a one-week training, at national level, on methodologies and tools for responding to the increased need of a psychological support caused by the pandemic; restoring children's wellbeing and sociality, and promptly preventing and responding in case violence occurs; as well as on the management and monitoring of the online and offline desks. Likewise, the training was specifically aimed at creating local adaptations to the REBOOT NOW desk model, designed by the partnership at EU-level, together with the professionals who would work on them. In addition, all national desks implemented a service of supervision for their service providers, operated by other psychologists.

Following these different methodological steps, the desk was finally launched in each participating country, each one with its peculiarities, starting from October 2022, and guaranteeing a minimum of 8 hours/week in each of the schools involved.

2.2. The itinerant counselling desk in Greece

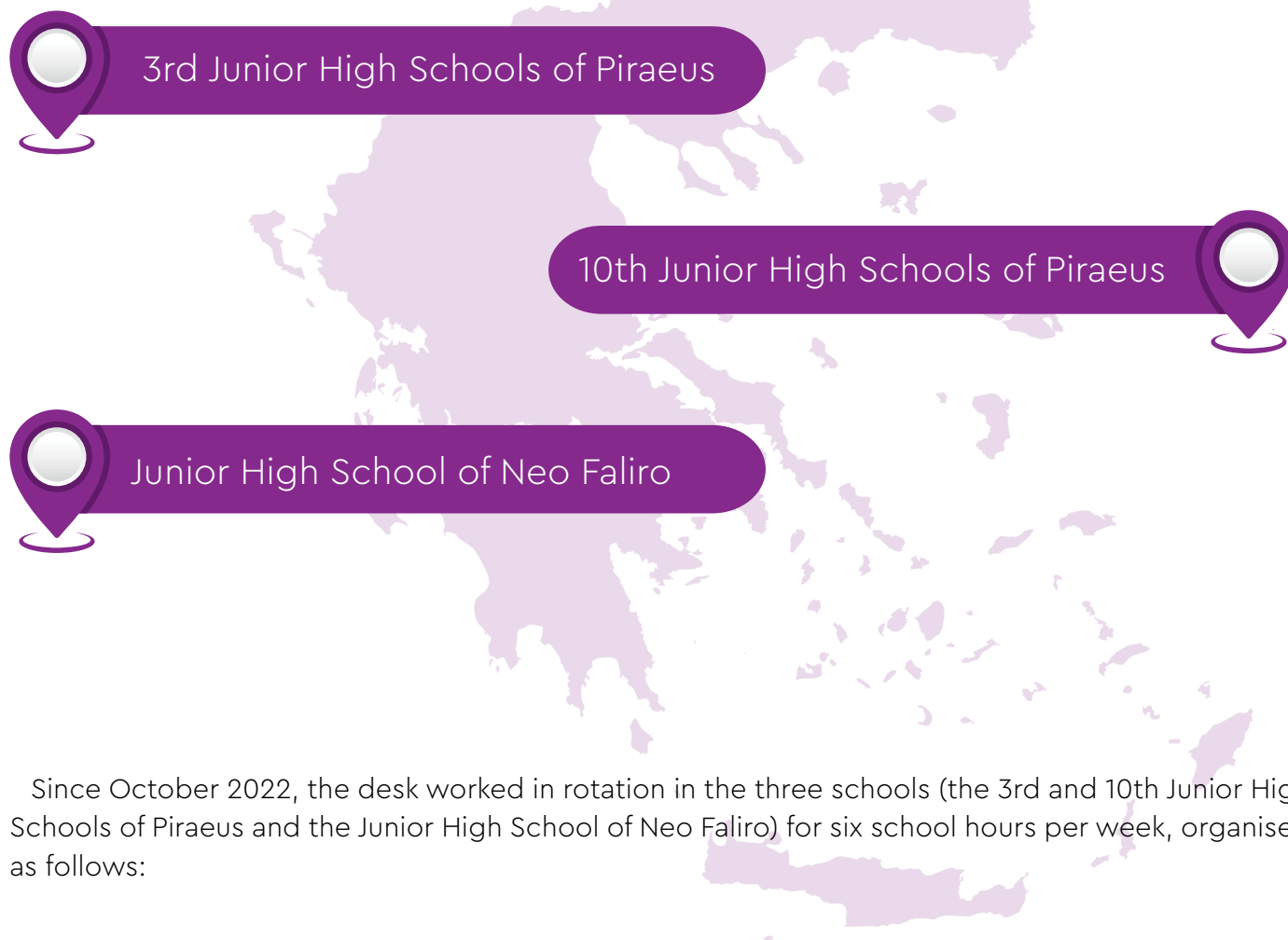
The REBOOT NOW project in Greece has established an itinerant counselling service to address students' mental health and well-being, particularly in light of challenges amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Amongst others and as the baseline data indicate, the aforementioned challenges pertained to students experiencing negative feelings, witnessing incidents of aggression and bullying upon the students' return to the school settings, and remaining hesitant in communicating their negative feelings to the experts.

The Itinerant Counselling Desk was operating in three junior high schools in Piraeus during the 2022–2023 school year (the 3rd Junior High School of Piraeus, the 10th Junior High School of Piraeus and the Junior High School of Neo Faliro), contributing to a supportive and inclusive school environment, and encompassing individual counselling for children, parents, and educators, group activities focusing on violence prevention, and training sessions for educators and school psychologists. Piraeus is a part of Athens's urban complex with a population of approximately 163,572, which maintains a demographic mix with a historical industrial past. The local schools operate within a complex urban web, impacted by historical factors such as refugee influx, industrialisation, and urbanisation. Educationally, Piraeus residents typically have a range of educational backgrounds, potentially influencing students' engagement. The three participating schools, each enrol around 200 students. The student body is almost evenly split between boys and girls, with approximately 20–25 students in each classroom. Understanding these dynamics in Piraeus is crucial for evaluating the effectiveness of the counselling service in nurturing students' well-being, mental health, and gender-sensitive perspectives. The local educational landscape and broader sociodemographic factors intersect to shape the students' experiences within the school system.

After selecting the schools, protocols of cooperation were established between KMOP and schools to define the desk's functioning, procedures, and policies. These protocols prioritised confidentiality, fairness, dignity, and individualised student support. Consent forms from children and parents or legal guardians were also included for interventions, ensuring the best interests of the child.

A one-week training for psychologists and counsellors equipped them with project goals, school counselling practices, and techniques for addressing GBV and mental health issues. National meetings disseminated information and fostered discussions on mental health, gender, and violence-related concerns. Launch events at two junior high schools informed students about the counselling desk service and the project, encouraging open dialogue and addressing concerns.





Since October 2022, the desk worked in rotation in the three schools (the 3rd and 10th Junior High Schools of Piraeus and the Junior High School of Neo Faliro) for six school hours per week, organised as follows:

| 3rd Junior High Schools of Piraeus | 10th Junior High Schools of Piraeus | Junior High School of Neo Faliro |
|---|---|---|
| Thursday 09.00–14.10 (Psychologist: Marinetta Kritikou) | Tuesday 09.00–14.10 (Psychologist: Alexandros Morochliadis) | Tuesday 09.00–14.10 (Psychologist: Charoula Tsatsani) |

An online booking system was activated for the individual consultations with psychologists, available on the project's platform www.thegendertalk.eu through a system of Google Calendar. Nonetheless, the system's structure did not permit the appointed psychologist to know which child has booked an appointment on the designated hours; thus, children were asked to also inform the professional when they proceeded to a booking, in order for the latter to be prepared for their session. Urgent sessions were also implemented in moments of crisis or when a relevant intervention was deemed necessary.

2.3 The starting point

To better frame the starting point of the REBOOT NOW action, KMOP implemented a baseline data collection among children from participating schools, about the feelings and emotions experienced during the pandemic, the needs they were facing, as well as the availability and eventual access to existing help services, in schools or outside, when available. However, hesitancy from the parents resulted in limiting the data collection to a single school, specifically the 10th Junior High School of Piraeus. This hesitancy could have been influenced by various factors that prompted them to refuse participation in the survey: concerns related to data privacy and confidentiality in sharing personal or sensitive information about their children's mental health, fearing that their responses could be traced back to them or their children; cultural perceptions of mental health and psychological support as taboo or private.

Therefore, a total of 105 children participated in the survey, offering Piraeus's local team a general picture of children's emotional status during the Covid-19 pandemic, gender-based violence incidence, availability and access to already existing counselling support services at school, and children's needs related to these topics

**Particularly,
it emerged that:**

A substantial number of students experienced negative emotions during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as loneliness, anxiety, fear, and disruptions in sleep or appetite (although to a lesser extent).

Encouragingly, most students reported feeling comfortable at home and sought support from their parents, friends, siblings, or teachers to cope with their negative emotions.

However, a significant portion of the respondents also reported witnessing instances of bullying, gender-based violence, physical attacks, or similar abuses within the school environment upon their return.

It is worth noting that only three out of 105 surveyed students disclosed their negative feelings or experiences to a psychologist or counsellor. This finding highlights the importance of having psychologists and mental health professionals present in schools to combat stigma and provide much-needed support to students.

The data collected emphasises the ongoing need for sustained resources and interventions to address the mental health challenges faced by children and adolescents, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although data collection efforts were limited to one school due to logistical challenges, the findings still offer a valuable snapshot of the prevailing conditions and serve as a foundation for the subsequent implementation and evaluation of the counselling service. Expanding data collection to other participating schools would enable a more comprehensive understanding of the broader context and facilitate more targeted interventions to support the well-being of students.





3. Lessons learned

3.1 Methodology

Following the **Monitoring and Evaluation Protocol produced by ZRS Koper**, the following tools were used in Italy to properly measure the impact of the action:

- ✓ **Two anonymous Questionnaire for users**, to be completed after a) each individual consultation; b) each group/workshop/event sessions respectively;
- ✓ **One Monitoring log form per school**, to be filled in by all experts running the desk after each individual/group session;
- ✓ **One Monitoring Log for the Supervisor.**

The data showed below in the next section are taken from these forms, which are however confidential and would not be attached to this report.

In total, 732 students were involved in the desk activity. Those who participated in the individual sessions were also engaged in the group activities. In this sense, the total number of children presented hereunder does not correspond to the sum of the individual and group sessions, but the group sessions only.

| 3rd Junior High School of Piraeus | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|------|-------|-------|--------|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| Users | Age | | | Gender | | | | Total |
| | 9-11 | 12-14 | 15-18 | M | F | Oth | N/A | |
| Children (individual consultation) | | 21 | 5 | 6 | 20 | | | |
| Children (group activity) | | 297 | 55 | 172 | 180 | | | |
| Total | | 297 | 55 | 172 | 180 | | | 352 |

| School 2 – 10th Junior High School of Piraeus | | | | | | | | |
|---|------|-------|-------|--------|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| Users | Age | | | Gender | | | | Total |
| | 9-11 | 12-14 | 15-18 | M | F | Oth | N/A | |
| Children (individual consultation) | | 25 | | 10 | 15 | | | 25 |
| Children (group activity) | | 200 | | 90 | 110 | | | 200 |
| Total | | 200 | | 90 | 110 | | | 200 |

| School 3 – Junior High School of N. Falirio | | | | | | | | |
|---|------|-------|-------|--------|----|-----|-----|-------|
| Users | Age | | | Gender | | | | Total |
| | 9-11 | 12-14 | 15-18 | M | F | Oth | N/A | |
| Children (individual consultation) | | 9 | | 7 | 2 | | | 9 |
| Children (group activity) | | 180 | | 96 | 84 | | | 188 |
| Total | | 180 | | 96 | 84 | | | 180 |

In addition to the 732 students who were engaged in the counselling desk activities, approximately 70 educators and 200 parents from all schools participated in relevant events

3.2 Interpretation of the collected data

The following section contains the analysis of the feedback received by users and service providers from the activities presented above.

3.2.1 Users' views

INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATIONS

Fifty-three users from the two schools from Piraeus completed the questionnaire feedback forms; students from the Junior High School of N. Falero appeared reluctant to respond to the forms and opted to provide their feedback in the context of an organised session. In general, participants reported **positive interactions** with the psychologists, describing the communication as good and appreciating the therapists' friendly and kind approach. Several students expressed gratitude for the assistance they received, with some highlighting the positive impact the sessions had on their mental well-being and personal growth. They found the counselling experience to be beneficial, helping them overcome difficulties, gain new perspectives, and feel comfortable discussing their problems.

| | |
|---|---|
| School 1 – 3rd Junior High School of Piraeus | Students from the 3rd Junior High School of Piraeus reported positive and constructive interactions with the psychologists, highlighting the quality of communication and expressing gratitude for the therapists' friendly and compassionate approach. Many conveyed that the counselling experience had positively influenced their mental well-being, leading to personal growth and newfound perspectives on their challenges. A prevailing sentiment among participants was the beneficial nature of the counselling sessions in overcoming difficulties and fostering a comfortable environment for discussing their concerns. The majority of respondents expressed their intention to return for further sessions, indicating a strong willingness to continue engaging with the counselling services. Moreover, many students demonstrated trust and confidence in the support by affirming that they would recommend the helpdesk service to others facing similar struggles. Specific aspects that resonated with participants included the empathetic demeanour of the psychologists, the freedom to express thoughts openly, and engaging in group activities focusing on empathy and emotional support. |
|---|---|

**School 2 – 10th
Junior High School
of Piraeus**

Similarly, students from the 10th Junior High School of Piraeus also conveyed positive experiences with the psychologists. They appreciated the psychologists' warm and empathetic approach, which fostered a non-judgmental atmosphere. Many students highlighted the sessions' significant impact on their mental well-being and personal development. The openness of the dialogue and the opportunity to explore their thoughts and challenges in a safe space resonated positively with the participants. Similar to School 1, a substantial majority of students expressed their interest in continuing counselling services and recommending them to others in need. The feedback reinforced a sense of trust and confidence in the service's effectiveness.

**School 3 – Junior
High School of Neo
Faliro**

Students from the Junior High School of Neo Faliro echoed the positive sentiments expressed by their peers from the other schools. In this particular school, students were reluctant to fill in the relevant questionnaire, thus, one of the psychologist appointed to the school organised a feedback session for children to share their views on the strengths and points for improvement of the programme implementation. Students emphasised the kindness and non-judgmental attitude of the psychologists, which created an environment conducive to sharing personal issues. The counselling sessions were perceived as instrumental in promoting mental well-being and assisting in addressing various challenges. The feedback reiterated a willingness to return for further sessions and to endorse the service to those in similar situations. Many students used the open comment section to share their individual experiences, expressing gratitude for the assistance and affirming its beneficial impact on their emotional and psychological state.



Students from the first two schools who answered the printed questionnaires used the open comment section of the survey to share their thoughts and reflections on the counselling service. The responses predominantly highlighted positive aspects, including the psychologists' kindness, non-judgmental demeanour, and safe space provided for discussing personal issues. Many students expressed gratitude for the help received and emphasised the positive impact the sessions had on their mental well-being:

"The sessions I had helped me step out of the door that I had closed, to open it and see my better self.", girl, 12 years old.

"I like it very much that when I talk, the psychologist gives all his attention and he analyses issues very well.", boy, 14 years old.

"Even if it wasn't as easy, I shared things that I wouldn't trust and I tried to see the world and myself in another way (I still can't, but I am trying)", girl, 14 years old.

"There is nothing I don't like. The sessions have helped me with many problems I am facing now and I faced in the past.", boy, 13 years old.

"Through the counselling service, we can share concerns, which makes us feel better, and this is very helpful.", girl, 15 years old.

"I liked that we worked as a team and that we learnt about empathy.", girl, 15 years old.

"I liked it because not everyone has the opportunity to visit an expert to consult them about their situation.", girl, 14 years old.

Exploit not only the classroom but also other spaces to perform additional activities related to prevention of violence, both school spaces and spaces outside the school (it has been suggested several times by students themselves)

Additional efforts are envisaged in order to properly communicate the possibility to ask for psychological support, not only at school, but in every context where children and youngsters are.

Aside from the individual counselling desks, the counselling service implemented various activities, which included workshops in class, interactive activities, and a Wellbeing Festival.

Similarly to the results above, the questionnaire responses from workshops, events, and other activities (53 users completed the questionnaire) also reflected **positive experiences and valuable engagement** from the participants. The interactive nature of these events provided students with a chance to learn and discuss various well-being topics, contributing to their overall personal development and mental health support.

In conclusion, not only the individual sessions but also the implementation of workshops, activities, and events demonstrated **positive outcomes and a strong commitment to promoting well-being and mental health support among students**. The feedback questionnaires revealed that the counselling service effectively met the needs of the participants, fostering a sense of trust, comfort, and confidence in seeking help.



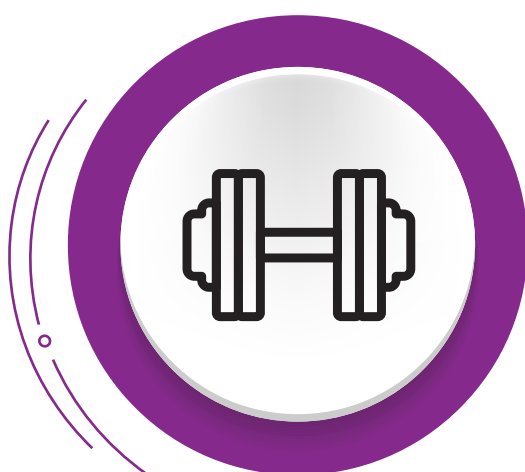
3.2.2 Service providers' views

The examination of monitoring logs across the three participating schools yields invaluable insights into the viewpoints of the service providers regarding the operation of the counselling desk.

| | |
|---|---|
| School 1: 3rd Junior High School of Piraeus | <p>In the case of the 3rd Junior High School of Piraeus, the analysis of monitoring logs highlights a predominant focus on individual counselling sessions. These sessions encompassed a diverse range of students in terms of age and gender. The topics covered were equally varied, addressing aspects such as grief management, setting boundaries, and providing general counselling support. An interesting aspect observed in this school was the engagement of parents in the counselling process. This inclusive approach recognised the interconnectedness of students' well-being with the dynamics of their family context. Furthermore, the psychologist at School 1 facilitated group activities and workshops on subjects spanning empathy, gender identity, school bullying, and overall well-being. This proactive approach is aimed at nurturing the holistic well-being of the entire school community.</p> |
| School 2: 10th Junior High School of Piraeus | <p>At the 10th Junior High School of Piraeus, the monitoring logs emphasise a similar inclination towards individual counselling sessions. These sessions were attended by students spanning various age groups and genders. The subject matter of these sessions encompassed a spectrum of concerns, including those related to grief, setting limits, and offering generalised counselling assistance. Echoing the approach of School 1, this school also recognised the importance of involving parents in the counselling journey. This comprehensive methodology acknowledges that students' emotional health is intricately intertwined with their familial environment. Parallel to individual sessions, the psychologist at School 2 orchestrated group activities and workshops. These gatherings delved into critical topics such as empathy, gender identity, school bullying, and overall emotional well-being, thereby fostering a supportive and informed school community.</p> |
| School 3: Junior High School of Neo Faliro | <p>The Junior High School of Neo Faliro's monitoring logs highlight a consistent pattern of prioritising individual counselling sessions. These sessions catered to students across varying age groups and genders. The themes addressed during these sessions encompassed a diverse array, including grief management, boundary establishment, and holistic counselling support. In line with the practices of the other schools, School 3 demonstrated the importance of involving parents in the counselling process, recognising the significance of the family context in students' emotional journeys. The psychologist at this school also spearheaded group activities and workshops. These sessions were designed to delve into topics such as empathy, gender identity, school bullying, and overall mental well-being, further fostering an atmosphere of interconnected support within the school community.</p> |

In essence, the service providers' perspectives, as gleaned from the monitoring logs of each school, underscore a shared dedication to individualised counselling sessions that span a wide range of topics. The engagement of parents within the counselling process, coupled with the implementation of group activities and workshops, reflects a comprehensive approach aimed at nurturing not only the students' mental health but also the overall well-being of the entire school community.

The majority of students across all schools opted for individual sessions as one-time users. However, some students, particularly in School 1 and School 2, became regular users, attending multiple sessions over time. School 1 had sessions that lasted for about 1 to 4 sessions per student, while School 2 had longer-running individual sessions with some extending up to 13 sessions for a student. The average duration of the sessions was one class hour. The SWOT analysis, conducted during exchange workshops with service providers across participating countries, provided an in-depth examination of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) associated with the help desk initiative.



STRENGTHS

- Stable and flexible schedules
- Strong cooperation with head teachers
- Effective promotion strategies
- Creation of welcoming settings that facilitated service access for users
- Additional support provided to students, who could discuss issues that were important to them

WEAKNESSES

- Challenges with the booking system and platform usability
- Dissemination of the help desk's services
- Communication barriers with resistant families and teachers
- Limited availability of resources
- Role confusion among teachers, youth workers, psychologists, and other professionals





OPPORTUNITIES

- Enhanced communication with stakeholders
- Strengthening of the Youth Advisory Board's role
- Revision of the platform for a better user experience
- Regular communication with teachers and parents
- Promotion in classrooms
- The Youth Advisory Board (YAB) can enhance communication, visual design, and promotion across schools while organising international meetings can facilitate valuable feedback and support ongoing improvements
- The platform's revision to enhance user-friendliness can streamline service accessibility and improve the user experience
- Addressing GBV challenges can lead to positive changes in attitudes and perceptions
- Crafting policy recommendations can strengthen advocacy efforts and influence mental health support at a systemic level
- Collaborating with other services and redirecting individuals can strengthen the support network and help desk efficiency

THREATS

Resistance from families and teachers towards psychological support or apprehension about the desk's presence may hinder its effectiveness

Some students may attempt to exploit the desk as a means to avoid classes, potentially undermining the core purpose of the initiative

Lingering stigmatisation surrounding mental health and psychological support might deter individuals from seeking essential assistance

Challenges in setting boundaries and coordinating itinerant services

Rigid school systems, and bureaucratic obstacles

Any attempts by schools to modify the desk's aims and roles could jeopardise the continuity and effectiveness of the initiative



In conclusion, the service providers' views indicate a dedicated commitment to addressing students' mental health needs through the counselling desk. The data collected from the monitoring logs and the SWOT analysis serve as valuable tools for further enhancing the counselling desk's operations, ensuring sustained support and a meaningful impact on students' well-being.



3.2.3. Supervisors' Views

The views of the supervisors, as gleaned from their assessments and reflections on the implementation of the counselling desk service, offer valuable insights into its efficacy and areas for improvement. The supervisors provided feedback on various aspects of the service, including the format of supervision, the issues they encountered during implementation, the provision of services, methodological problems, and organisational and logistical challenges.

Format of Supervisions:

The supervisors opted for group supervision, conducting a total of eight sessions throughout the school year. This group approach facilitated collective discussions, knowledge exchange, and collaborative problem-solving, enhancing the counsellors' skills and competence.

Issues Supervised Related to the Implementation of the Service:

The supervisory sessions covered a range of critical issues pertinent to the effective execution of the counselling desk service. Notably, the quality-of-service provision received meticulous attention, ensuring consistent and professional support for the beneficiaries. Communication and consent matters with parents were also addressed to maintain transparency and ethical standards. The counsellors focused on key issues relevant to teenagers, aligning their interventions with the distinct needs of each school context. They deliberated on communication with managers and organisational aspects concerning group actions within departments. Additionally, the supervisors addressed the communication and training of teachers concerning mental health issues affecting young people, emphasising the significance of fostering a supportive school environment. Moreover, they examined the material and organisation of targeted interventions for students, parents, and teachers, ensuring tailored approaches to specific subjects. The management of complex cases involving children facing bullying or abusive family environments was a subject of careful consideration. Lastly, the supervisors provided support for practitioners facing personal difficulties in handling student cases, fostering their emotional well-being while undertaking demanding responsibilities.

Provision of the Service: Type of Problems Shared by Beneficiaries, Dynamic of the Relationship, and Communicational Issues:

The provision of the service was thoughtfully aligned with the unique needs of each school and individual student. The beneficiaries expressed satisfaction with the services provided, with no major issues reported. Minor challenges were encountered in communication with parents, highlighting the importance of continued efforts to foster open dialogue and engagement. The counselling desk addressed prevalent concerns among students, including performance anxiety, interpersonal relationships, gender-related discrimination, familial challenges, and other mental health issues. The dynamic relationship between the counsellors and beneficiaries appeared conducive to the effective delivery of support, promoting a sense of trust and safety. The positive feedback from management, teachers, parents, and students across all participating schools validated the service's effectiveness.

Methodological Problems: Format of the Sessions, Counselling Frame, and Requesting Feedback and Consent Forms:

While the service exhibited overall effectiveness, some methodological challenges were encountered. Difficulties arose in the collection of consent forms and evaluation questionnaires, warranting attention to ensure comprehensive data collection for ongoing evaluation. The provision of individual sessions faced logistical hurdles due to the availability of suitable rooms, as exemplified by instances of utilising an unsuitable space like an old library with temperature-related concerns.

Organisational and Logistical problems: communication with School Authorities, Collaboration with School Psychologists, and Referral of cases

The supervisors addressed organisational and logistical challenges, emphasising the need for effective collaboration with school authorities and professionals. The segregation of cases with school psychologists emerged as a significant challenge, as the school psychologists had responsibilities to monitor children with learning difficulties, occasionally causing delays in serving those seeking counselling from the REBOOT psychologists. Moreover, challenges arose in organising group activities with a school psychologist due to differing programmes, necessitating streamlined coordination. Nevertheless, the supervisors highlighted the overall positive cooperation with school principals, facilitating the smooth execution of the programme. Importantly, no incidents arose that required external referrals to social services or child protection services beyond the school context.



Conclusions and Recommendations Related to Supervision:

In conclusion, the REBOOT NOW counselling desk was effectively implemented, positively impacting both individual students and the school community at large. The supervision process played a pivotal role in maintaining service quality throughout the school year by addressing difficulties in a prompt and structured manner. The supervisors commended the exceptional cooperation and knowledge-sharing among colleagues, which allowed for the successful adoption of effective strategies across different schools. Collective discussions on individual cases fostered best practices and optimal management approaches for students with shared characteristics.

The emotional well-being of professionals was also deemed significant, acknowledging the demanding nature of their roles in supporting teenagers while managing family and school dynamics. To further enhance the counselling desk's effectiveness, the supervisors suggested focusing on raising awareness and destigmatizing mental health issues within the wider community. Targeted efforts should be made to challenge stereotypes surrounding individual diversity, such as sexual orientation and disability. Encouraging teacher involvement in interventions, even within their respective classes, could foster a collaborative and supportive environment. Additionally, counsellors should capitalise on opportunities to engage parents' associations in these efforts, leveraging increased awareness to effect positive change in perceptions and attitudes towards mental health.

The supervisors emphasised that a sensitised and activated community would gradually lead to positive transformations in perceptions, ultimately benefiting the well-being of students and the entire school community. Thus, consistent efforts in awareness-raising and collaboration hold the potential to augment the counselling desk's impact and solidify its position as a vital resource for effectively addressing students' mental health needs.

4 Conclusions

The implementation of the RebootNow desk service for psychological support within schools has yielded valuable insights and outcomes. Despite facing various barriers and challenges, the collaborative efforts of multidisciplinary professionals have resulted in positive outcomes and best practices, contributing to the well-being of students and the school community. The following conclusions can be drawn:

4.1. Barriers and recommended solutions

4.1.1. Systemic barriers

Difficulties that they face:

- ✓ There is a need for individualised strategies of implementation and communication in each school.
- ✓ Difficulty engaging parents in our implementation.
- ✓ Stigmatisation and Perception. A prevailing barrier was the stigma surrounding mental health issues – and psychologists –, leading to resistance from some parents, teachers, and students to seeking support. Students also raised concerns about the potential stigma associated with seeking support from a psychologist, highlighting the need for de-stigmatisation efforts and raising awareness about the importance of mental health.
- ✓ Confidentiality concerns: Students expressed worries about the confidentiality of their conversations with the psychologist, demonstrating a need for clear communication and reassurance regarding the privacy of their sessions.
- ✓ Limited Resources. The desk service encountered challenges related to resource availability, including the number of sessions and professionals, impacting the extent of its reach. Also, there was a lack of time for the schools to do group activities because of their full programme.
- ✓ Communication and Consent: Obtaining consent forms and feedback from beneficiaries proved difficult at times, highlighting the need for streamlined communication processes.
- ✓ Role Confusion: Ambiguity in roles among different professionals (e.g., school psychologists and counsellors) led to coordination and cooperation challenges.
- ✓ Limited parental understanding: Some students had questions and concerns about parental consent for participating in counselling activities, indicating a potential lack of parental awareness or understanding about the counselling desk service.

Additional barriers to utilisation

- ✓ Segregation of Cases: In Greece, there are some psychologists in the schools, but their time is limited, and the services start late, usually in the middle of the school year. They were invited to collaborate with REBOOT NOW's psychologists. However, coordinating cases between the desk service and school psychologists created delays, particularly for students with learning difficulties.
- ✓ Room and Facility Accessibility: Difficulties in finding suitable rooms for individual sessions posed logistical challenges.

Positive outcomes and best practices

- ✓ Holistic Support: The REBOOT NOW desk service successfully provided holistic support to students, addressing issues related to gender-based violence and mental health.
- ✓ Active information sessions: The information sessions conducted in classrooms facilitated direct communication with students, allowing them to interact with the service providers and ask questions, which helped in building trust and understanding of the counselling desk service.
- ✓ Multidisciplinary Approach: The collaborative efforts of professionals from diverse backgrounds facilitated comprehensive support, combining individual sessions, group activities, and workshops.
- ✓ Tailored Interventions: By conducting mapping exercises in each school, the service tailored its interventions to address the specific needs of the students in each unique context.
- ✓ High Satisfaction Levels: Positive feedback from students, teachers, parents, and school management reflected the effectiveness and impact of the service. This indicated a supportive and receptive environment, which played a significant role in promoting the acceptance and success of the counselling desk.
- ✓ Collaboration with schools: The collaboration between the counselling desk service providers and the participating schools fostered open dialogue, enabling effective communication and the successful implementation of the counselling service within the school setting.
- ✓ Collaborative Networking: The successful collaboration of professionals from different disciplines and schools provided a model for best practices in creating a supportive and integrated network.
- ✓ Regular Supervision: Regular group supervision proved instrumental in maintaining the quality-of-service provision and promptly addressing challenges.
- ✓ Engagement of Teachers and Parents: Involving teachers and parents in the service's implementation through workshops and open dialogues can create a more supportive and integrated approach.

In conclusion, the Counselling Desk service exemplifies the effectiveness of a collaborative and multidisciplinary approach in addressing the mental health needs of students. While barriers and systemic challenges were encountered, proactive steps were taken to mitigate their impact. The positive outcomes, including holistic support, tailored interventions, and high satisfaction levels, underscore the importance of such initiatives within the school setting. The identification of best practices, such as regular supervision, targeted awareness campaigns, and the engagement of teachers and parents, serves as a roadmap for enhancing the reach and impact of similar services in the future. By continuously refining and implementing these best practices, school-based psychological support services can play a pivotal role in fostering the mental well-being and overall development of students.

Lessons Learned from the Project

1. **Holistic GBV Prevention:** The project emphasised the importance of adopting a holistic approach to GBV prevention and integrating it into school-based psychological support services. This comprehensive strategy addresses teen dating violence and fosters healthy relationships among students.
2. **Inclusive Mental Health Interventions:** Tailoring mental health interventions to cater to the diverse needs of students was found to be crucial for promoting inclusion and a safe environment for all, including those with disabilities or from marginalised backgrounds.
3. **Community Awareness on Mental Health and GBV:** The project highlighted the significance of raising awareness within the school community and society at large. These actions destigmatise mental health issues and raise awareness about GBV prevention among teenagers.
4. **Continuous Training and Supportive Supervision:** Regular group supervision and continuous training for professionals proved essential for enhancing their capacity to handle sensitive cases related to GBV. Supportive supervision created a conducive team environment.
5. **Person-Centred Counselling Approach:** Implementing counselling approaches that prioritise the individual needs and experiences of students involved in violent relationships led to more effective interventions and support.



6. Collaboration with External Services: Establishing effective communication and collaboration with external services, such as social workers and child-protection agencies, enhances the support network available to students facing GBV.

7. Data-Driven GBV Prevention Strategies: Utilising data from mapping exercises and monitoring logs provided valuable insights into patterns and areas of concern related to GBV. This data-driven approach facilitated evidence-based prevention strategies.

8. Promoting Inclusivity and Diversity Education: Incorporating inclusive education that promotes acceptance of diverse sexual orientations and identities creates a safer environment and reduces discrimination within schools.

9. Engagement of peers (YAB): Empowering the youth to take part in peer-led initiatives effectively raised awareness about GBV prevention within schools.

10. Continuous Evaluation for Improvement: Regular evaluation of interventions related to GBV prevention and inclusivity was instrumental in identifying successful practices and areas for improvement, fostering continuous enhancement of support services.

The project has shown that to effectively prevent gender-based violence (GBV) within schools, a comprehensive and holistic approach is needed that integrates mental health interventions and fosters healthy relationships among students. This requires raising awareness within the school community and society at large, providing regular training and supportive supervision to professionals dealing with sensitive cases related to GBV, and utilising data-driven GBV prevention strategies. Additionally, promoting inclusivity and diversity education, engaging youth in peer-led initiatives, and conducting regular evaluations of interventions related to GBV prevention and inclusivity can further enhance support services. It is important to tailor interventions to cater to the diverse needs of students, provide person-centred counselling approaches that prioritise individual needs, and establish effective communication and collaboration with external services. These steps can create safe environments and reduce discrimination within schools by empowering youth and enhancing the support network available to students facing GBV.



Policy recommendations

Key policy recommendations for the government, civil society organisations, interested parties on the promotion of mental health and prevention of GBV at schools, and other stakeholders in a national context.

Implement a holistic and exhaustive legislative approach towards the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV). The legislation should require the integration of GBV prevention and healthy relationship education into school curricula and psychological support services.

Enrich educators with the necessary awareness and proficiencies by imparting training and education on gender-related and mental health issues.

Establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms using action plans, questionnaires, and other tools to ensure adequate implementation of this curriculum.

Prioritise mental health in school and educational settings. The schooling system must be one of the principal foundations for the prevention and support of mental health problems in young individuals.

Create avenues for the inclusion of parents and families in activities and workshops on gender-related and mental health issues.

Devise a holistic and comprehensive curriculum that encompasses gender-related issues while being culturally varied and composed of inclusive materials about ethnicity, race, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, and different abilities, thereby making its inclusion in the school system mandatory.

Introduce psychosocial support and psychoeducation through psychologists in every school across the country.

Allocate sufficient funding and resources to schools to ensure the effective implementation of GBV prevention and mental health support programmes.

Arrange mandatory supervision sessions for school psychologist services.

Foster interdisciplinary and external collaboration between schools, mental health professionals, experts on gender-related issues, non-governmental organisations, relevant stakeholders, and the government. Moreover, involve students in policy development.

4.2. Sustainability of the help-desk

In pursuit of ensuring the sustainability of the itinerant counselling desk services in schools, we have formulated several suggestions to continue the provision of support to interested participating schools. Our approach entails utilising in-house resources and national-level services, as well as fostering collaborations with other projects, be they EU-funded initiatives or those undertaken by local authorities. As we embark on the exploration of viable options, particularly with ongoing projects and forthcoming initiatives in the upcoming school year, we are committed to identifying the most suitable arrangements.

The essence of our proposals can be outlined as follows:

Continued Provision through Collaboration with EU-Funded Projects and Partner Organisations:

We aim to forge partnerships with other EU-funded projects and organisations affiliated with our partners to secure the continuity of counselling sessions. By pooling resources and expertise, we can sustain counselling desk services and extend support to a broader range of schools and communities.

Cooperation with Municipalities:

To extend the reach and impact of our services, we seek to collaborate closely with the municipalities where the participating schools are located. Through such partnerships, we aim to share the knowledge and experience gained during the project's implementation, thereby fostering the implementation of counselling sessions in collaboration with local authorities.

Organisation of Ad Hoc Online Sessions:

To adapt to evolving circumstances and facilitate accessibility, we envision conducting ad hoc online counselling sessions. These virtual consultations, in cooperation with the schools' headteachers, will provide an alternative means of delivering support and ensuring the continuity of services beyond the project's timeframe.

Transfer of the knowledge to Field Organisations and School Psychologists:

Acknowledging the significance of sustaining mental health interventions in schools, we are committed to transferring the know-how and materials acquired during the implementation of the counselling sessions to relevant field organisations and school psychologists. By empowering these entities with valuable insights and resources, we aim to facilitate the ongoing implementation of similar interventions in diverse educational settings.

By implementing these strategies, we aspire to cultivate a sustainable framework for itinerant counselling desk services in schools. Our collective efforts will not only contribute to the long-term success of the project but also the enhancement of mental health support systems for students and school communities beyond the scope of this initiative.

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