

Best practices that can be adapted to use in VET

i. Youth program Teenshtein - Bulgaria

Organisation	 Essence Foundation
Location and timing of practice	The youth program Teenshtein has been running since 2006. It started in Sofia and is now also active in three other Bulgarian cities.
Title	“Teenshtein”
Objective:	
<p>“Teenstein” is a psychological program for young people between the ages of 13 and 19. It aims to provide them with psychological support for dealing with the challenges that come with change and being a teenager, as well as to create a long-term and sustainable space, through monthly group meetings, where young people have the opportunity to further accumulate emotional intelligence and knowledge about one’s self and others.</p>	
Detailed content:	
<p>The Teenstein Youth Program creates an environment for developing self-awareness and relational awareness skills that are essential for building a strong identity. The program offers 2 up-to-date interactive training sessions, each lasting 4 days. As a kind of journey into their own inner world, during training, young people learn to recognise, accept and share their emotions, explore their own behaviour and reactions, and go beyond their comfort zone. They have the opportunity to deal with difficult and painful situations of the past, learn about their resources and strengths, learn how to overcome fears and insecurity with greater confidence, as well as develop tolerance towards the "different."</p> <p>The main approach is learning through experience, and part of the set topics are: "Myself and others", "My limiting beliefs and behaviours", "Relationships with parents", "Communication between people", "Developing self-reflection skills", "Personal qualities and talents and how do we express them", “Taking on personal responsibility“, "Me and the group", “Goals, intentions, dreams" and more.</p> <p>Along with the training sessions, the program also includes regular monthly meetings where young people can continue to deepen their work on the topics discussed during the training. These meetings provide a sustainable and lasting space for sharing and accumulating knowledge about themselves and the world and thus helping young people build a healthy</p>	



identity.

Evaluation of results:

The biggest success of the program is its sustainability. Over the past 13 years, more than 1000 young people have participated in it. During the first 5 years of the program, there were 1-2 trainings sessions each year in Sofia, and today the training sessions take place regularly across 4 Bulgarian cities. Another testament to the success is that over 60% of the new participants in the training come on the recommendation of teenagers who have gone through the program and are not persuaded or coerced by their parents.

What makes it a good/best practice?

In Bulgaria, psychological work and self-reflection work are not yet very popular and are even partially stigmatised. In addition, the Bulgarian educational system is not sufficiently focused on the development of soft skills, respectively, self-awareness and relational awareness are not present in any way in the curricula. Although as a non-formal education, Teenstein has developed its own methodology for working with young people. It is the first and still one of the few programs in Bulgaria providing an opportunity for long and in-depth group work with teenagers.

How can it be adapted to VET?

The Teenshtain program is very suitable to be transferred and used in the VET system as in its essence it is intended for adolescents between the age of 13 and 19, which is the main age group in VET schools.

Instead of having the four day format it can be developed as a weekly program, where each meeting has a 2 or 3-hour duration. The number of meetings will depend on the goals of the program and the topics included. If the main goal of the program is to create a good environment of trust, so that difficult and painful situations can be shared and processed, the duration of the program can be at least half a year or more. If the goal of the program is the development of self-awareness and relational awareness skills, it could be of shorter duration, but it is recommendable to have not less than 12 meetings. It can be organized in mixed groups of students from different grades and ages, but it could also be organized based on the age principle (for example only 14 year olds, only 18 year olds or 14-16 year olds; 16-18 year olds, etc.). The topics that are part of Teenshtain can be used, but new topics can be added too, but it is advisable to maintain the main work approach – learning through experience.

Other information	Website: https://essence-foundation.bg/teen-courses/ Social media: - Facebook Available in Bulgarian.
Contact	Milena Nenkova



	milena@essence-foundation.bg
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ii. Improved mental health services - Bulgaria

Organisation	National Center of Public Health and Analyses 
Location and timing of practice	The project was developed and carried out in Bulgaria from 2015 – 2017. The information and methodologies created as part of this project are available for free use by all interested parties and can be found on the project's website.
Title	Project “Improved mental health care services”
Objective:	
<p>The main aim of the project was to improve public health and develop evidence-based policies on mental health. The specific objectives of the project were to increase the knowledge of GPs, doctors, psychologists and social workers for early detection and treatment of common mental health issues. Target groups and final beneficiaries were GPs; school teachers and psychologists; those with mental health issues and their families.</p>	
Detailed content:	
<p>The activities of the project cover two areas – information and training.</p>	
<p>Information:</p> <p>The project took a public campaign to raise awareness of mental health problems and suicidal behaviour. A brochure with useful information about depression and anxiety was prepared, printed and distributed across the country, as well as an information leaflet about child aggression in schools and how to overcome it.</p>	
<p>Training:</p> <p>Experts from the Regional Health Inspection of the Ministry of Health were trained to work with young people in schools on topics such as depression, anxiety, aggression and self-aggression (which includes self-harm, self-blame, self-humiliate etc). GPs, psychologists and social workers were also trained for the early detection of these disorders. A web portal was developed to provide online training on mental health, providing lectures, case studies and video examples which allow the individual to gain a theoretical knowledge on the most important aspects for the early detection of anxiety and depression. There is also an offline</p>	

