DIGITAL STORYTELLING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

DYME

About the DYME project

Digital Storytelling for Youth Mental Health (DYME) project empowers young people (18-30 years olds) with new skills to manage the negative impacts and challenges of the 21st century.

Young people nowadays face multiple challenges: social inequalities are rising; social mobility is decreasing in most of the European countries; the labour market requires new skills and public education cannot always keep up with these needs; while environmental sustainability is becoming a more and more burning issue that may soon affect our everyday life. It is not surprising that feelings of anxiety, helplessness, loss of personal integrity are more and more common problems among young people in Europe made even worse by the COVID-19 pandemic.

With DYME, we aim to use a digital storytelling approach to raise awareness and empower young people to cope with challenges and mental health issues, supporting them in building resilience among peers in their communities. For this, we need to equip youth workers with modern communication and development tools. The first result of the project, the Digital Storytelling Educational Program will provide essential knowledge to youth workers about the level of usage of digital storytelling in non-formal activities targeted to youth in all partners' countries (Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Portugal and The Netherlands) and the level of usage of digital storytelling as a capacity building tool to empower youth to actively react to challenges of our age. As part of the educational programme development, we carry out extensive research including literature review, surveys, interviews and review of best practices.

Aims of the project result:
- To create state of the art analysis of the usage of digital storytelling methods in non-formal education targeting the youth, focusing on utilising it as a capacity - building tool;
- Examination of youth workers' needs and competencies required for using digital storytelling and their needs and competencies when approaching mental health issues among youth;
- Serve as a starting point for the preparation of the digital storytelling curriculum and training programme for the youth workers.

Partners

Hidak Ifjúsági Alapítvány
(Hungary)

www.youthbridgesbudapest.org

Youth Initiative Center
(The Netherlands)

www.youthinitiativecenter.eu

Youthfully Yours SK
(Slovakia)

www.youthfullyyours.sk

JUMPIN HUB
(Portugal)

www.jumpinhub.com

Zavod Aspira
(Slovenia)

www.aspira.si

Smart Idea
(Slovenia)

www.projects-with-igor.eu

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BACKGROUND RESEARCH

The first step in developing the educational program was a comprehensive background research in the partner countries and beyond. This consisted of the following steps:
1. Literature review
2. National surveys on existing best practices
3. Interviews with experts
4. Surveys on digital storytelling and mental health in youth work in practice

The first activity was writing a literature review involving findings of relevant publications, critically analysing them, and explaining what we found. All partners searched for 6-10 relevant literature for analysis. Not only academic publications were reviewed but also handbooks, guidelines, educational programs of other projects, case studies etc. The literature focused on digital storytelling and its innovative methods (e.g., animation, comics) and/or youth work on mental health in digital environments. Traditional storytelling methods and findings were involved too to examine their transferability potential for our project.

As the next step, national surveys on the topic of mental health and digital storytelling were examined, to collect data and gather best practices. 6-9 national best practices were presented on two main topics: digital storytelling and youth work on mental health. The main aspect is the relevance and usefulness in our project. The difference between the first activity (literature review) is the practical focus of the survey – this time we collected existing, well-working practices regarding youth mental health and digital youth work.

As part of the comprehensive research, to get a deeper understanding on the project's topic and the selected best practices, we conducted 3 interviews in each country, 15 in total. Semi-structured interviews are a blend of structured and unstructured interviews. While the interviewers had a general plan for what they wanted to ask, the questions did not have to follow a particular phrasing or order. All partners summarised their interviews according to a predefined set of criteria.

Third time, an online survey was elaborated to assess the specificities of working with young people's mental health, digital youth work and awareness of digital storytelling among youth workers. On the request of the partners, 150 education and youth professionals filled out the online questionnaire to give a greater insight about digital storytelling in youth work, in particular in mental health-related activities. In the questionnaire we asked about the target group, work and needs of the respondents; one main topic was digital storytelling awareness and use; and the other one the mental health in youth work.

The following summary of results forms the basis of the educational program.

Literature review

In total, 29 literature was analysed by the partners. A vast majority of them are academic studies, complemented by similar documents from other projects. One analysis is elaborated about a relevant project for which project results have not yet been produced. Most of the literature analysed is in English, but there are also some in Hungarian, Slovenian and Portuguese. The majority of the literature focuses on digital storytelling or digital pedagogy, and less on mental health. Some literature deals with both the relationship of digital storytelling and mental health. The target group of the project documents analysed is youth workers working with young people, and a number of studies have focused on this age group.

The first analytical aspect was the context and history of the literature's topics, including problem statements. Secondly, analysts provided a short summary for each literature. We also looked at the results, lessons learned, innovative elements and aspects of the literature relevant to our project.

What is digital storytelling?

It is nothing new that storytelling has been a feature of human culture throughout history. Stories are not only heritage for future generations, but also have an entertaining role. Nowadays, many people carry on their stories by using digital tools. A digital story can be explained as a bridge of traditional and modern media (Syafryadin, 2019).

Long story short, digital storytelling methodology was developed by the StoryCenter NGO. Its 'Silence Speaks' programme includes a number of case studies and digital stories that can be used as an excellent introduction to social studies, language, ethics, classroom teaching, biology or geography (Lanszki, 2016). Compared with discussions about photovoice, phototherapy, and youth media practice, digital storytelling has a much shorter history. Although there are many publications introducing how to create digital productions, there are only a few publications that have systematically theorised the use of digital storytelling in social work or other human services (Chan & Sage, 2019).

Digital storytelling can be seen as both a methodology and a tool, with authors often differing in their opinions. The digital stories are a few minutes of film, multimedia (re)presentations, which can be used in education to introduce or work with a certain topic interactively. Using digital stories, effective motivation and listening with empathy are provided. This mode of digital expression goes beyond the traditional way of telling stories and involves animation, sound, text, nonlinear happenings and interactions. (Šerbec & Žerovnik, 2014).

One of the earliest and most widely cited references to digital storytelling is Lambert's Digital Storytelling Cookbook (2010), which represents a typical understanding of digital storytelling as it might be applied to social work. Lambert's publications have helped popularise an idea that digitalisation is about using short multimedia clips to produce personal stories (Chan & Sage, 2019). The Cookbook suggests a 7-step approach: 1. owning insights, 2. owning emotions, 3. finding the moment, 4. seeing the story, 5. hearing it, 6. assembling it, and 7. sharing it.

Several authors (Chan & Sage, 2019; P. Hathorn, 2015; Rácz & Bulyáki, 2021) and projects emphasise the inclusive approach of digital storytelling. Innovative solutions and methodologies like storytelling with LEGO©, building bricks method (DigiStorID project), picture language (Picture your Story project), C-L-A-SS (Communication-Language-Art-Social Science) approach ("xPress Yourself" through Digital Storytelling project) help to create safe space, and give practical tips for facilitators. A key concept of digital storytelling is the empowerment of the learner, which will lead to increased involvement and active participation.

How can digital storytelling be integrated into education and youth work?

Education faces an unprecedented challenge today: teachers should try to avoid using the traditional education like lectures, written tests and recitation as the only teaching method. Instead, they should adopt teaching models that inspire students to think, to learn to learn, and to apply their knowledge to create and solve problems (De Vecchi et al., 2017).

The model of holistic approach to learning is based on the assumption that learning has creative, cognitive, social and emotional aspects. The 4C (Connect, Construct, Contemplate, Continue) ensure the development of these skills and a deeper integration of the learning outcomes (Lengyelné et al., 2021). The impact of new technologies in educational contexts has been mostly positive as new technologies have given educators the opportunity to enhance their knowledge, skills, and therefore enhance the standard of education (Smeda et al., 2014).

As the attention of learners nowadays is becoming shorter and shorter, the use of images and short text explanations micro-contents are adapted to the accelerated information consuming habits (Szűts, 2020). The advantage of student-centred instruction is to provide a positive learning environment for students wherein they can participate in challenges (Garrett, 2008). Therefore, the authors further adopted student-centred project-based learning (SPBL) to enhance students' learning effects. (Tsai et al., 2015). As an approach to working with media tools and storytelling, digital storytelling can be an exciting experience for a wide range of people from children through adult learners. (P. Hathorn, 2005). Digital storytelling encourages students to think creatively, create, plan, play roles and collaborate (Šerbec & Žerovnik, 2014).

When storytelling is used as a tool, it must be done ethically. (Simmons, 2002). The ethical and legal implications are also reflected in Lanszki's (2021) study; digital storytelling as the creation process may reveal sensitive content, the facilitator must take into account several ethical considerations. As regards copyright, the importance of referring to external content and the consent of all concerned should be mentioned too.

There are six types of stories according to Anette Simmons (2002): "Who am I?" stories, where one should bare personal details to show what has earned you the right to influence the reader; "Why am I here" stories, where one should expose their agenda; "Vision" stories, where current difficulties are reframed as exciting possibilities; "Teaching" stories, where the story emulates an experience that the reader will hopefully learn from; "Value in action stories" where values are communicated through narratives and "I know what you're thinking" stories, where one validates secret suspicions in someone's mind and then dispels the objectives through a narrative. Choosing the type of story beforehand makes the process of content creation easier.

Digital storytelling can be a powerful tool to integrate instructional messages with learning activities to create more engaging and exciting learning environments. This approach has the potential to enhance student engagement and provide better educational outcomes for learners. (Smeda et al., 2014). Digital storytelling can be a helpful educational tool in youth work too, as it provides a useful combination of digital media and innovative teaching and learning practices. (Smeda et al., 2010).

How does the digital world affect youth mental health?

The mental health of young people is deeply linked to family situations and care, but on the other hand, young people spend much of their time at school (Camelo, 2019), therefore education has an essential role in identifying mental health problems. However, many cultures stigmatise mental health disorders, which makes it difficult for people to seek help. (Deoksoon & Fang, 2020). Studies show a major lack of information and negative reinforcement in the media when reporting mental disorders. The mainstream media and internet manifestations play an essential role in changing this view and fighting prejudice. Depression, although it is an increasingly well-known disease, it is still considered taboo in many communities.

Nowadays, taking into account young people's relationship with the media, it is crucial that they have the best tools to develop critical thinking about the information that reaches them every minute and that can often cause feelings of anxiety, stress or frustration (Brites et al., 2019). Not only is fake news dangerous to the well-being of young people, but cyberbullying is also an emerging phenomenon among youngsters. They can be equipped against these by developing their soft skills. The COVID-19 pandemic has made it even more relevant to the digital challenges of our time, which particularly affect young people, like alienation, sleep problems, low self-esteem or feelings of uncertainty about the future and hopelessness.

Mental health problems in teenagers are common, can seriously affect the development and autonomy of the future adult, and most of them tend to develop a chronic evolution, with negative and serious reflections at family, educational and social levels (Camelo, 2019). To talk about mental disorders, to combat stigmas and prejudice is an urgent issue (Pinto, 2012).

How can digital storytelling be used in youth work on mental health?

Digital storytelling is also used as an art-based research method that might be useful in mental health for engaging consumers, carers, and clinicians in mutual dialogue (De Vecchi et al., 2017). Digital storytelling in health surveillance has potential to point to complex narratives in a compelling manner and increase participant engagement. It also has the significant potential to meaningfully capture and share participants' lived experiences about their mental health issues, as a systematic review of its use is crucial to develop an in-depth understanding for healthcare professionals (Rieger et al., 2018), as for youth workers in identifying young people's mental health problems.

Digital stories can be used to reduce negative attitudes about mental illness and substance use disorders and encourage people to seek help, treatment services, and/or support. The process of sharing one's recovery experience through stories can be a healing and empowering exercise for storytellers as well (SAMSHA, 2016). Teachers can use the educational technology of digital storytelling to help immigrant students learn about mental health (Deoksoon & Fang, 2020) and there are successful digital storytelling practices with people living with intellectual disability too (DigiStorID project).

In conclusion, digital storytelling can be an excellent pedagogical tool that allows youth to engage both in subject matter learning and self reflection (Brites et al., 2019), therefore it can be an effective tool to combat mental health issues too. Digital storytelling can also be a tool for observation and action in the hands of the youth worker, but to use it effectively requires a lot of background knowledge, skills, sensitivity and 21st century competence.

Surveys on digital storytelling and mental health in youth work in practice

At our request, the questionnaire was completed not only by professionals from our own countries, but also from many other countries all over the world. The partners' contribution at national level is equal. Most of the respondents are youth workers or educational professionals, working with young people on a daily basis. Some respondents' target groups are more comprehensive (13-30 years olds, high school and higher education students, youth active on international level and also disadvantaged young people including NEETs), while others' are better defined (e.g. unemployed young people in a certain region; rural youth with geographical and/or economical difficulties; refugees and immigrants; youth belonging to minority groups like roma; potential entrepreneurs; disabled young people; VET students of specific areas). Some respondents mentioned youth workers, social workers, educational professionals as part of their target groups too.

An important data is that more than 70% of our respondents have never received any education on digital youth work and the vast majority does not rate the availability of training opportunities highly in this field. Confidence in the use of digital storytelling is more evenly spread, but overall it is at most on medium level in our sample. These data are particularly worrying because respondents consider digital storytelling to be an important tool for youth work and for dealing with mental health problems among youth. Overall, youth workers feel unprepared for the method, but use it because they think it is inevitable. An easily accessible, flexible and basic training on digital youth work can be a great help to many youth workers.

The situation is similar with youth mental health. Although the majority of respondents experience problems in this area among young people, they report few tools to help them and a lack of the necessary expertise. Especially after a global pandemic, in a world of increasing uncertainties, and as digitalisation continues to grow, they need new and innovative tools and resources better adapted to modern needs.

Our data show that a relatively small group of respondents are familiar with and confident in using digital storytelling in their work, while the majority are unsure about it and use it less often. This means there is a need for knowledge sharing and exchange of experience among respondents.

The detailed consolidated report of the surveys is available in English here.

BEST
PRACTICES

Methodology

During the base research data gathering and collection of best practices focusing on the two main topics: digital storytelling and youth work on mental health were done via surveys and desk research. During the analysis the main aspect considered the relevance and usefulness for DYME. The difference compared with the literature review is the practical focus - in this phase, we aimed to collect existing, well-working practices regarding youth mental health and digital youth work.

Each partner collected 6-9 best practices from all over Europe and beyond, all together 40 best practices gathered. With cross-evaluation and a point system we established on order with the following criteria:

- Relevance to the target group: to what extent is the practice relevant for the whole target group aged 18-30;
- Accessibility for Youth workers: can the practice be applied directly without prior preparation, including materials, equipment or training;
- Field of reference of the practice in different areas of teaching/training: can this practice be applied in more than one topic/subject/ training;
- Connection to digital storytelling and/or youth work on mental health.

Based on the evaluation, 20 selected best practices are presented below. The selected best practices are diverse and can be categorised differently, such as: previous projects & project outputs; tools & toolkits, tips & articles, theory and educational curriculum, campaigns.

Selected best practices

Projects

1. MyStory

MYSTY Erasmus+ KA2 project, run between 2015-2017 by a consortium of universities, schools and education centres. MyStory: Digital Storytelling Toolbox for Diversity Training in Schools provided innovative tools for pupils and teachers – specifically, related to digital storytelling – to share and introduce such teaching practice to enhance awareness on diversity within the school environment. It increased pupils' cultural awareness and expression and enhanced their social, civic and digital competences.
Relevance: The outputs included a training course and learning materials for educators, video tutorials, guidelines for pupils. The project serves as a good example on how to use digital storytelling effectively in a school environment.

https://mysty.eu/ (EN)

2. Guidelines for Digital Storytelling in Early Childhood Education

STORIES: foSTering early childhOod media liteRacy competencIES Erasmus+ project run between 2015-2017 by a consortium of universities from 4 countries. STORIES followed a holistic approach to implement digital storytelling in early childhood education and care. The outputs support educators with professional training and guidelines enabling them to develop, implement and evaluate learning scenarios based on digital storytelling.
Relevance: Although the partnership focuses on a different age group, they developed a theoretical framework, as well as practical, training materials related to the usage of digital storytelling.

https://digitalstorytelling.eu/ (EN)
Guidelines (EN)

3. Comp-pass

Comp-pass Erasmus+ KA2 project run between 2016-2018 by a consortium of NGO's from 7 European countries. The main aim of the project was to contribute to the reduction of the percentage of NEETs at the European level by promoting the empowerment, participation and the active citizenship of young people. One of the main results is a Digital Storytelling Guidebook for Educators. The aim of the guidebook is to get an overview of storytelling as a non-formal educational methodology and approach, as well as to support educators in preparing digital storytelling workshops.
Relevance: The theory and the practice of storytelling are well-presented in this handbook, handy for youth workers and young people, too. The handbook is particularly useful for ones working with young people with fewer opportunities.

Digital Storytelling Guidebook for Educators (EN)

4. Digital youth work

The Digital Youth Work Project is an Erasmus+ project with 7 partners from 6 different countries, implemented between 2017-2019 with the aim to build capacity to deliver digital youth work at local, national, regional and European levels. The project platform provides useful sources: DYW training materials for youth workers, EU Guidelines for DYWork, and also represents tips & tricks on how to use digital technology and applications to engage young people.
Relevance: Useful materials on DYW, and creative ideas and specific activities, campaigns and how to engage young people online.

https://www.digitalyouthwork.eu/ (EN)

5. Storytelling for Youth Work

Storytelling for Youth Work is an Erasmus+ KA2 project, with the aim to promote and enhance quality youth work and to develop high-quality educational and practical materials for youth workers. Storytelling for Youth Work aims to strengthen the connection of youth workers with young people via the positive effects of storytelling, by adapting the storytelling methodology to suit the field of youth work. The Multimedia Guide consists of a handbook and various multimedia products – podcasts, videos, interviews, etc., which guide you into the art and work of storytelling in youth work – online or offline.
Relevance: The handbook provides a very good theoretical framework of storytelling and the toolkit gives practical knowledge of the usage of different multimedia products.

https://storytelling-youth.eu/#/en/ (EN, BG, DE, EL, SL, SR)

6. Digitalise it!

Digitalise it! is an Erasmus+ project run between 2017-2019 with the partnership of 5 youth organisations from across Europe. The aim of the project was to experiment, share and confront practices on innovative, digital and creative methods and tools to foster empowerment and social inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities. In the framework of the project a toolkit was created to introduce DST in theory and in practice.
Relevance: It is a short guidebook on how to use storytelling from theoretical to practical (how to write a story, what kind of technical equipment we need etc.).

Digital Storytelling in Practice: A pedagogical guide for the use of digital storytelling in youth work (EN)

7. MEMEX

MEMEX is a H2020 project (2019-2022) promotes social cohesion through collaborative, heritage-related tools that provide inclusive access to tangible and intangible Cultural Heritage (CH) and, at the same time, facilitate encounters, discussions and interactions between communities at risk of social exclusion. The technological embodiment of MEMEX is an app installed on a smartphone allowing non-expert users to create and visualise stories related to their personal memories and experiences digitally linked to the geographical locations of either intangible (e.g. an event) or a tangible cultural places/object.

https://memexproject.eu/en/ (EN)

8. ReGap

"Reducing the Educational Gap for migrants and refugees in EU countries" (ReGap) is a research project run between 2017-2019 created culturally sensitive open access e-learning resources to adult migrants and refugees offering the opportunity to build a strong sense of social inclusion and belonging. Using digital stories is a powerful pedagogical tool for creating social belonging and well-being in the ReGap courses. They are interwoven in the learning resources and activities through videos, texts, images and interactive activities - presenting personal stories.

http://www.regap-edu.net/ (EN)

Campaigns

9. #youarenotalone

#nemvagyegyedül (#youarenotalone) was a campaign by UNICEF to help the youngsters who experienced/experiencing cyberbullying, run in 2018 and 2020. The organisation aimed to help these young people by providing the possibility to talk to someone, and share their stories and feelings. The campaign also included celebrities, who are popular among youngsters, thus reaching out to a larger audience, and they could easily deliver important messages concerning the topic.
The relevance for this project is the topic, since the campaign's main aim is to deal with problems regarding mental health of young people. They used digital storytelling methods to share their own stories, and connect with the audience.

https://unicef.hu/nemvagyegyedul-2020 (HU)

10. Young people and mental health

The animated video depicts the transition from childhood to adolescence, highlighting the importance of mental health. It covers identity construction, the role of family and friends, the desire for attention and recognition, the need to break the rules, and aspects related to risky behaviors such as pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, radical activities, suicidal behavior, violence, psychoactive substances, eating disorders, and Internet addiction.
Relevance: The video target for children and teenagers, and can be used by teachers and discussed in school settings. The content is informative for parents and other family members, too. A great example for youth mental health and digital storytelling.

https://youtu.be/2R9JZy-w-44 (PT)

Tools, toolkits

11. Programming

The practice is made for teenagers and elementary school students, and the aim is to teach them the very basics of programming. The practice teaches them in a fun way, which requires active participation and creativity. There is a detailed instruction for teachers about how to use the programme, and how to engage youngsters.
Relevance: The practice includes the engagement of youngsters with digital storytelling tools. There are various applications that can be used to create a digital story and to share ideas, but learning how to use them can be challenging, and the technical parts can demotivate youngsters. Gamification, and group work are great tools to overcome these obstacles.

https://skool.org.hu/tudasbazisaloldal/digitalis-tortenetmeseles-1/ (HU)

12. Audacity

Audacity is a free and open-source digital audio editor and recording application software. Using music making resources can help young people to express their emotions, feelings and thoughts in a creative way, and in many cases help them to start a conversation about things that they can not put in words at first.
Relevance: it is an easily accessible digital tool that can be used with different target groups, throughout different environments and touch different topics.

https://www.audacityteam.org/ (EN)

13. Photo Essay

"Photo Essay" DST toolkit introduces youth to the tools and techniques that can be used to create original digital content about social issues, trends, and happenings that are important to them. Photo essays allow students to express their ideas through the images they capture. This medium requires students to use critical thinking and creativity to select and arrange photographs in a way that conveys a message.
Relevance: It includes the engagement of youngsters with digital storytelling tools. The main goal is that youth can learn how to collect, analyse, and present factual and expressive information about social issues that are important to them.

Photo Essay (youthlearn.org) (EN)

14. Digital Storytelling Workshop

A two-day virtual workshop organised by UNICEF Thailand and Beyond Books aimed to empower young people to become strong advocates for children and youth through creative and impactful storytelling. In the workshop, participants learned about storytelling techniques, ethical reporting, campaign planning and staying safe online. To be able to effectively lead a campaign and plan community development activities, they also participated in a training on leadership and accountability, learning how to garner support and create trust in their communities.
Relevance: The workshop content is valuable, includes 5 online sessions to teach about benefits, skills and best methodologies of storytelling.

The Art of Digital Storytelling for Young People | UNICEF Thailand (EN)

Tips, articles

15. Workshop series

Storytelling Centre is a European leader in the development of unique methods that use story as a means for social change. Their workshop series of several 'sessions' for professionals in, among others, healthcare and education. Participants learn to use their personal story professionally and to facilitate storytelling in their own field. They learn the social theory behind storytelling, dozens of interactive assignments and learn what to do when a client shares a powerful personal story in a group.
Relevance: It is an easily accessible digital tool that can be used with different target groups, throughout different environments and touch different topics.

https://storytelling-centre.nl/en/ (EN, NL)

16. Storytelling Tips

The video tutorial provides useful tips for storytelling, helps to identify the key element of storytelling in an understandable, easy way.
Relevance: Short tips to share with youth workers and young people to have their attention and deliver the message in an attractive way.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHvg7pAfgEg (EN)

17. 30 Storytelling Tips For Teachers

The article provides detailed guidelines and useful tips on how to create a good story in order to catch audience attention.
Relevance: Well-collected recommendations on storytelling to share with youth workers and young people.

https://www.teachthought.com/pedagogy/storytelling-tips-for-teachers/ (EN)

18. Literacy Teaching Toolkit – Storytelling (Theory)

The early childhood Literacy Teaching Toolkit presents high quality integrated teaching and learning approaches focusing on language and literacy.The contest of the section 'Storytelling' goes back to the basics of storytelling, why it is important since our ancestors used it to pass knowledge, values, and tradition to new generations.
Relevance: The content can help us to understand the basics of the storytelling in the past & how we can transfer something traditional to the new digital era.

Literacy Teaching Toolkit – Storytelling (EN)

19. Digital Storytelling Curriculum

This curriculum was developed by organisation YouthLearn for the Adobe Youth Voices (AYV) program. AYV was a ten-year, philanthropic effort of the Adobe Foundation to increase creativity in education. In this 8-session curriculum, participants use photo and video editing software to create a digital story. Participants explore their own histories to construct a personal narrative.
Relevance: The main goal is that youth can learn how to collect, analyse, and present factual and expressive information about social issues that are important to them.This tool is helping students utilise media tools to communicate their ideas effectively and tell their stories in unique and personal ways.

Digital Storytelling Curriculum (EN)

20. DEEP

The digital audiovisual psycho-educational intervention "DEEP" is composed of a web series, entitled "The Wound Sara", which consists of a sequence of narrative-based short-videos life of the university student Sara, interspersed with psychoeducational episodes that convey more explicit episodes that convey more explicit information about depression. It is structured in 21 videos organised in two phases: a first phase with the diagnosis of the problems and identification of the symptoms, called "DEEP In"; a second phase called "DEEP Out" with recovery, problem-solving, help-seeking, therapeutic solutions, as well as breaking taboos breaking taboos in relation to depressive symptoms.

Study (EN)

Interviews

As a part of the comprehensive research, semi-structured interviews were conducted to get a deeper understanding on our main topics and the best practices. We aimed to provide an in-depth knowledge building a full picture approach to understand how youth workers and educators view youth and mental health in relation to digitalisation. We searched for further approaches and practices on how youth work can cope better with youth mental health issues and digitalisation.

From May to July 2022, we conducted 15 interviews with youth workers, trainers, teachers, as well as digital educational experts from the 5 partner countries. A psychologist and a mental health professional were also asked related to mental health topics. The target groups of the interviewees vary: most of them work with youngsters between 16-30 years old; one teacher works in a primary and secondary school with students from 6-15 years old; two youth workers are based in regional youth centres and get in touch mainly with high school students during their work, while three focus mainly on university students (18-24 years old). Some mentioned young people with fewer opportunities as their main target group: youngsters face social, economical or geographical obstacles, as well as youngsters coming from migrant families.

Youth and mental health - insights, experiences, effects of the pandemic

Nowadays, when talking about mental health, COVID-19 pandemic is an unavoidable topic. Mental health issues during the pandemic were related to lockdowns and isolation, stress, and the unpredictability of the situation. Young people had problems coping with isolation at home, lack of social contacts and not being able to predict what will happen next. Staying at home, locked with the parents and family without the opportunity to go out, discover new things, being with friends (what is typically important for this age group) was a difficult factor.

Building a community and connecting with peers is one of the most important for high school and university students, so it was definitely a loss for them. They were not ready to go through this: being in one physical space at the same time, and they also missed important transitional events and traditions like prom and graduation parties. This issue was also emphasised by the mental health professional working with university students who experienced integration difficulties of newcomers who could not properly say goodbye to their high school peers because of the regulations and lockdowns in 2020 and 2021.

The long-term effects of the pandemic on mental health are difficult to predict – one says. On the other hand, teachers, educators and trainers who meet young people in formal or non-formal educational settings, noticed similar changes of their students: e.g., students' focus decreased, they became less confident, had problems with expressing themselves, and they coped harder with challenges because they did not know how to manage emotions. Another educator also mentioned that for her it is still challenging to cope with the strong emotions of young people and help them to express these emotions in a proper way. Trainers have observed increased anxiety, social disconnection and inability to form meaningful face-to-face relationships even after the pandemic when the social and physical distancing was encouraged.

Many of the interviewees pointed out that with the pandemic, the importance of mental health came into focus. There is an increased interest of youth towards mental health, which includes prevention („Self-care is important"), as well as the increase of the demand of young people searching and wanting professional help. In relation to this, an educator expressed that for her one of the biggest challenges is to notice and diagnose problems such as loneliness, anxiety, and lack of social life. In her opinion educators should make students talk about their problems and help them overcome these obstacles.

There is a digital storytelling project (called ArtDiCo) targeting migrants, marginalised people and unaccompanied child migrants, and one of the activities is to share their COVID stories which helps them to be conscious about all this "collective trauma" that they went through. The project manager noticed that it is a part of the process of healing and getting better mentally.

Cyberbullying

In the relation of young people, mental health and digitalisation the phenomenon of cyberbullying is one of the hot topics. Teachers, educators working with vulnerable age groups, shared their thoughts with us. According to their experiences, cyberbullying is a common and serious problem. Youngsters often come across with offensive comments to their posts, they are sometimes offended in the (social media) groups they are part of or get from the group by other friends/schoolmates, they encounter hate speech and are witnesses of verbal violence. An identified reason can be the anonymity: „it is because they are hidden behind a screen, not facing their peers face to face, they feel more encouraged to do bad things, as they know they will not be held responsible for their actions."

One teacher observed that at the beginning of the pandemic it was more frequent, now her students are more conscious and aware of the consequences and know that they aren't fully anonymous on social media. It shows the importance of media literacy, educational programs and raising awareness campaigns.

One of the trainer's opinions: topics such as bullying, cyberbullying, and hate speech can awaken strong emotions and affect young people's mental health and participation, so she considers that it is very important to carefully manage these topics, choose the best methods and explain them properly.

Other challenges in youth mental health were also mentioned during the interviews by the experts. The phenomena of information overload which creates insecurity to decide which information is important to pay attention to, which one is valid, etc. It is in connection with insecurity in private, family life, as well as in career pathways. Freedom of choice creates insecurity and pressure on young people compared with previous generations who had less opportunity in career and societal mobility.

Fear of missing out (FOMO) is the feeling of apprehension that one is either not in the know or missing out on information, events, experiences, or life decisions that could make one's life better. FOMO is also associated with a fear of regret, which may lead to concerns that one might miss an opportunity for social interaction, a novel experience, a memorable event, or a profitable investment. It is characterised by a desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing and can be described as the fear that deciding not to participate is the wrong choice.

As societal changes and technological development are irreversible and unstoppable, we need to adapt, and support the youngsters and new generations – our interviewee pointed out. Digital literacy education can support youngsters to recognize fake news and give them tools and tips to be able filter the information. Furthermore, career guidance can increase youth self-awareness by helping them to reflect on their interests, ambitions, competences, qualifications. Improving soft skills and the relation with mental health of young people was also mentioned. It is not a direct impact, but rather an indirect one. Improving communication skills can help people to better understand what other people say, accept criticism or look beyond words people say and look for the meaning behind their words. The ability to provide feedback, or to assert oneself can improve self-esteem and prevent the negative impact of other people on our mental health. There were many more examples of how improving soft skills can improve mental health.

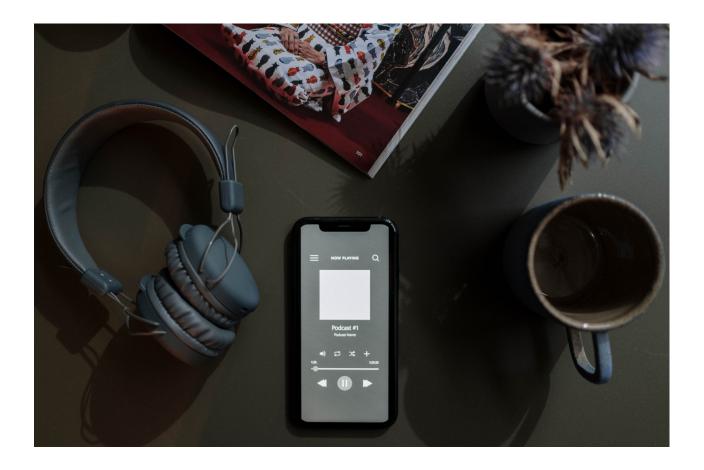## Digitalisation - benefits, challenges, adaptation of youth work

Youth workers agree that it is easy to reach young people online, via different social media platforms (Instagram, TikTok, Instagram, etc.). However, several interviewees emphasised that the content and how we convey the message is important: it should be attractive, engaging, and most importantly up-to-date, following the current trends. One interviewee considers the biggest challenge is the connection with young people in digital youth work and the ability to keep their focus and interest when digital tools are not used. Another one also emphasised that interactive methods should be used for presentations, too: „I discovered that young people really respond to visual and auditory stimulants and interactive presentations." The structure of the online education is very participatory, reflective and can really address the needs of participants. Some teachers also give students opportunities to use technology in classrooms, be part of a group, develop social and language skills, and boost their confidence.

On the other hand, it is important to find the middle way which can be sometimes challenging: „*Digital youth work can be used and should be used only if it enhances the experience or enhances the impact of its use on the user. Using digitalization as a tool should be considered carefully and used only if necessary and should in my opinion not be the first and only choice. Youth workers and young people need to have face-to-face sessions as not all senses, emotions, non-verbal communication and activities can and should not be adapted to digital format.*" Another challenge mentioned in digital youth work is community building. Some find it challenging to create a sense of community and connections when all meetings are online. When working with young people online, there is also a lack of unstructured time (such as coffee breaks) when most connections and creative thinking/ideas forming are conceived – one claims.

Some interviewees (active in local or regional youth centres) reported difficulties, too: „Young people developed resistance towards online activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. After spending hours at computers for school, they were glad to do something non-digital after school. Therefore, it was complicated for us to offer online activities that would interest young people."

Interviewees mentioned several digital tools they use during their work for communication, presentation, collaboration, evaluation and feedback, etc.

Not all the interviewees had experiences with digital storytelling, but they expressed their interest, and identified the advantages of it. "It can be a way to enrich students, develop their creativity and imagination and language skills too."

Podcast, as an effective digital storytelling tool was particularly mentioned by one of the organisation representatives: in their work podcasts have shown benefit for young people in opening up and reconnecting. They consider it as a positive thing as they believe by being on a podcast and youth workers being interested in their life and them.

Youth workers see the value in digital youth work, but some local organisations do not have enough support and skills to use more complex methods, such as digital storytelling in the most effective and meaningful way. Youth workers improvise and use these techniques through a self-learning process and with limited capacities.

Another, more technical aspect was an existing challenge and barrier in digital youth work: paywalls. For many of the organisations it is impossible to pay yearly subscriptions for several services that they use once or twice a year. That leaves them using free, limited, old services which are not always suitable. So, even if they have the willingness and skills for using new ICT tools and apps, there is a limited reach of proper applications.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Target group's needs

The different research methods allowed us to see and analyse the challenges of digitalisation and youth mental health in several ways. Common points emerging from the literature, questionnaires and interviews were the existing knowledge of youth workers on mental health and digital storytelling, the sensitivity of this topic with a special regard to COVID-19 pandemic, and technological readiness and availability of tools and applications.

Youth workers have different levels of knowledge and training needs in the topics of digital storytelling and youth mental health. Although many youth workers consider digital storytelling an inevitable tool in digital youth work, many of them do not feel prepared enough to use it and lack easily accessible training in these topics. The situation is quite the same with youth mental health. These problems are often deeply connected to family circumstances, personal or school matters, so it is not easy for youth workers to recognise these issues and handle them properly.

Even if they are aware about mental health issues and symptoms, it is a real challenge to interrupt. Mental health is a very sensitive topic in peer environments and youth work. Serious problems like depression or other mental disorders may have the same symptoms like stress, anxiety or temporary sadness, while young people often do not talk about such issues like cyberbullying or alienation from their peers. However, literature and practising youth workers agree that digital storytelling is a great tool for social work, thus suitable for preventing and solving smaller everyday mental health problems of young people.

Digital storytelling is not a complicated method or tool itself, this makes it suitable for youth work too. However, it does not mean it does not require knowledge and skills from youth workers. Ethics and legal conditions occurred during the literature review, while technological readiness, use of digital tools and applications, and digital skills connected to them were mentioned in both the questionnaires and interviews. Youth workers need at least basic knowledge on picture and video editing and social media to use the digital storytelling methods properly.

Approach of learning

The selected best practices show us that the most successful tools and projects using digital storytelling and/or dealing with youth mental health apply a complex approach but work with simple activities. The well-being of young people must be handled as a final target to be achieved, including physical and mental health, even if our educational resources focus on mental health. At the same time we must apply the general approach that the human soul cannot be separated from the physical reality and that in many cases simple things such as the quantity and quality of sleep, sport and the use of digital devices can affect mental health.

When designing training for youth workers, we also must consider time as a critical point of their learning processes. We need to deliver easy-to-use, short and concise information and exercises for them as their time is often very limited. These educational resources should include resources and further readings (links to webpages, e-books, other e-learning materials) to enable youth workers to develop their skills in areas relevant to their needs.

Modular approach will be applied in the educational resources to ensure their flexibility and adaptation to individual needs. Modular approach is an emerging trend of educational thinking that shifts traditional methods of instruction to an outcome-based learning paradigm. Modularisation is based on the principle of dividing the curriculum into small discrete modules or units that are independent, nonsequential, and typically short in duration. Modular approach will ensure that the educational resources will be transferable, respond to the different needs of the youth workers and lead to effective learning and thus to improvements in the quality of youth work.

Scope

As mentioned above, educational resources should be basically short, and can be extended in stages. Therefore, we will provide some theoretical background for each topic, including links to further readings and theoretical resources. To ensure the practice-oriented approach, which is an essential element of non-formal education, we will also develop exercises, energisers, and practices that can be used in everyday youth work. These easy-to-use resources will come with detailed descriptions of target groups, method of use, equipment and time requirements etc.

Concrete recommendations for the educational program based on the findings:
- Basic terms of on digital youth work, digital storytelling and mental health, building common understanding
- Digital literacy for professionals, how to keep our social media skills up to date
- Empowerment in digital environments, active participation of youth
- Recognition of mental health problems, intervention, professional boundaries
- Bases of storytelling, digital storytelling methods in youth work
- Privacy and copyrights in youth work in digital storytelling
- Knowledge sharing, exchange of experience, professional forums

Glossary

A glossary will be prepared based on the contents of the modules. The clear, easy-to-read collection of the basic terms on (digital) storytelling, youth mental health and digital youth work will ensure that the modules will be useful for those who are not or only partially familiar with the topic.

Aims

- To learn the basic concepts, expressions, acronyms in digital storytelling and mental health;
- To ease the reception and processing of the following modules;
- To build a common understanding among professionals.

Timeframe: 10 minutes

Necessary tools, devices, platforms: computer, PDF reader

Keywords: basic terms, expressions, acronyms

Module 1
Digital and social media among youth

This module aims to introduce youth workers to digital youth work. We are also presenting why and how digital and social media can be used in their everyday work and activities as well as for addressing different and also difficult topics by using modern approaches that are closer to young people, and they are able to use it.

Aims

- To understand digital youth work;
- To encourage youth workers to use digital and social media in their everyday work and activities;
- To present best practices in digital youth work.

Learning outcomes

Direct impact on youth workers' competencies

Develop competencies of youth workers in using digital and social media.
Provide youth workers with digital educational resources, methods, and tools to themselves and their organisations in the digitalisation.
Promote the added value of digital tools in youth work.

Indirect impact on young people

Youth workers will be more aware of possibilities that digital and social media give to young people and how they can involve young people in their organisations' digital strategies.

Possibilities for use

The module presents a basic introduction to digitalisation and social media and its connections with young people. It can be helpful for youth workers, trainers, facilitators, teachers, volunteers, and other educators in youth centres, NGOs, and schools working with individuals or groups of young people to present them the positive sites of digitalisation and social media and how they can use them in creative ways.

Timeframe: 2 hours
Necessary tools, devices, platforms: computer, paper, pencil
Keywords: Digital youth work, social media, usage of social media, activities

Module 2

Digital storytelling methods in youth work

This module aims to introduce youth workers to the opportunities that provide digital storytelling methods. Within this module, we will offer various ways in which digital storytelling can be used to guide youth in constructing their understanding of learning, explain their own experience, facilitate collaborative activities, promote in-class discussion, help them learn problem-solving and critical thinking skills, understand complex ideas, introduce them to new content, and more.

Aims

- Develop competencies of youth workers in using digital storytelling as a capacity-building tool;
- Provide youth workers with digital educational resources, methods, and tools to empower local young people in a digital environment;
- Promote the added value of digital tools in youth.

Learning outcomes

Direct impact on youth workers' competencies

Youth workers will be more confident and equipped to arrange activities with young people using digital storytelling methods in various settings.
They will have the opportunity to explore the benefits and challenges of digital tools when working with young people, including youth in vulnerable situations.

Indirect impact on young people

This content will uplift young people's imagination, inspiring them to express themselves creatively through digital storytelling. It will promote self-directed learning as well as individual reflection.

Possibilities for use

The module can be helpful for youth workers, trainers, facilitators, teachers, volunteers, and other educators in youth centres, NGOs, and schools working with individuals or groups of young people to encourage creativity, deepen self-expression and boost digital literacy. The module is fit for getting new knowledge on digital youth work and storytelling methodology as well as discovering new activities attractive to youth on different topics.

Timeframe: 1-2 hours
Necessary tools, devices, platforms: computer or tablet, PDF reader application, smartphone, camera; prior basic knowledge: computer, Web browser, Adobe or similar PDF reader application
Keywords: capacity building, digital environment, activities, digital tools, youthwork, informal learning

Module 3

Digital storytelling methods in youth work

This module introduces digital storytelling as a youth empowerment tool. In this unit, we will learn about empowering young people by demonstrating a variety of ways to use digital storytelling to guide young people in building understanding of learning, explaining specific experiences, facilitating collaborative activities, enhancing classroom discussion, and helping learn how to solve problems, critical thinking skills, understanding complex ideas, introducing them to new content, and more.

Aims

- Giving youth workers theoretical and practical knowledge on youth empowerment in digital environments;
- Raise awareness on the importance of youth empowerment;
- Encourage youth workers to support young people in personal development;
- To learn how to use digital tools in active participation.

Learning outcomes

Direct impact on youth workers' competencies	Indirect impact on young people
Youth Workers will be more equipped to handle working with modules or using digital tools as they will already possess some knowledge and experience, through participation.	Through working with digital tools, especially using them to empower youth, youth workers will gain not only experience and knowledge but also passion and a better attitude toward teaching as they are becoming better experts in their fields.

Possibilities for use

The module can be used by youth, teachers, and youth workers, almost anyone who finds these tools useful. The module is made for gaining knowledge and learning some new digital tools and how to use them in daily, work, or any other environment. Contains easy-to-understand text and is applicable to almost any environment.

Timeframe: 1-1,5 hours

Necessary tools, devices, platforms: computer, Web browser, Adobe, or similar PDF reader application and basic knowledge in them; YouTube, Kahoot

Keywords: youth empowerment, digital storytelling, learning, soft skills, active participation

Module 4
Youth work on mental health with digital storytelling

This module aims to equip youth workers to work on youth mental health in digital and online spaces, particularly with digital storytelling. During this module, we not only provide fundamental knowledge about identifying and handling mental health issues but also we will explore topical issues such as COVID-19 and release, information overload and how to deal with it, addiction and frustration in social media and cyberbullying.

Aims

- Training and guiding youth workers in recognition of mental health problems among young people, ways and times of intervention, professional boundaries to request specific professional help (e.g. child and youth protection, psychologist, psychiatrist, dietician)
- Developing awareness and handling of mental health problems caused by covid; giving knowledge and tools about lack of life events and cornerstones in young adults' lives and how to letting them go
- Giving an insight to information overload and how to deal with it, the abundance of opportunities and the fear of missing out; support youth workers working with youth self-awareness and career consciousness
- Training on youth addiction and frustration in online spaces and social media; shaping attitudes on digital world and reality
- Training on the basics of cyberbullying; giving tools for prevention and intervention in online spaces

Learning outcomes

Direct impact on youth workers' competencies

Youth workers can learn about specific topics like digital storytelling and professional boundaries, effects of the COVID-19 pandemic among youth, supporting youth in personal and career choices, social media addiction and cyberbullying but more importantly, they can shape their attitudes towards burning challenges of our days in terms of digital youth work and problems of young people.

Indirect impact on young people

Thanks to this module, youth workers can make an impact on youth by supporting them in stepping forward with their lives, become more aware about themselves and their career opportunities, the proper use of digital and online tools and become more resistant to digital addiction and cyberbullying.

Possibilities for use

The module can be used by youth, teachers, and youth workers, almost anyone who finds these tools useful. The module is made for gaining knowledge and learning some new digital tools and how to use them in daily, work, or any other environment. Contains easy-to-understand text and is applicable to almost any environment.

Timeframe: 1-1,5 hours

Necessary tools, devices, platforms: computer or tablet, PDF reader application

Keywords: recognition, intervention, prevention, protection, disorders, pandemic, lockdown, release, information overload, frustration, addiction, cyberbullying

Module 5
Privacy and copyrights in digital storytelling

This module aims to equip youth workers with the most important, indispensable and applicable information regarding privacy and copyrights in digital storytelling. With this module, we will help educators and trainers to be aware of the law to know what kind of images, sounds and other media can be used without infringing the copyrights of others.

Aims

- Introduce young workers to the concepts of Privacy and Copyright - definition and distinction between the two concepts - particularly in the context of Digital Storytelling.
- Recognize the major implications arising from the digital world for each of the concepts.
- Develop youth workers' awareness about the importance of knowledge regarding privacy and copyright law.
- Provide youth workers with digital resources that allow them to easily access information about privacy and copyright in digital storytelling.

Learning outcomes

Direct impact on youth workers' competencies

This module will enable youth workers to learn about the concepts of Privacy and Copyright and to apply them appropriately in their training, notably in Digital Storytelling. It will promote the development of their self-confidence in using and presenting digital resources.

Indirect impact on young people

This content will enable young people to learn about their right to privacy and to know that their personal information should only be used with their permission. Through this module, young people will become aware of how their personal information is used and learn how to delete or correct erroneous data.

Possibilities for use

This module can be useful for Youth Workers, Trainers, Educators, Teachers, Facilitators, Volunteers in youth centres, schools, training centres who use digital resources during their training. The relevance of this module is reinforced by the existence of multiple means of depositing, consulting, and using information that belongs to third parties, whether individuals or entities, and is therefore subject to regulation.

Timeframe: 1-1,5 hours

Necessary tools, devices, platforms: computer or tablet, PDF reader application

Keywords: privacy, copyrights, digital tools, youth work

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