

FACULTY OF SOCIAL
AND ECONOMIC SCIENCES

Comenius University
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INSTITUTE OF APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

Mental health literacy and mental health education for young people

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About the project

A joint project of the European Federation of Psychology Teachers' Associations (EFPTA) and the Board of Educational Affairs of European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA) aimed to **discover and map the provision of mental health topics and skills in the school curriculum in different European countries**, to identify how mental health topics are included in psychology courses and other areas of the curriculum in upper secondary school education.



National projects and funding of selected activities:

KEGA 035UK-4/2022 Psychology education for non-psychological professions: Methodological and content support
APVV-22-0078 Mental health among adolescents in the context of current societal challenge

International Congress of Psychology, July 21 – 26, Prague, Czech Republic
Invited Symposium: Developments, challenges and contemporary issues in psychology education (hosted by BEA EFPA)



Young people and mental health

- **30% of adolescents** in the international HBSC (Health Behaviour of School-aged Children) study reported **worse mental health** after the COVID-19 pandemic ([Cosma et al., 2023](#))
- **20% of 13- and 15 year old girls** in Slovakia are at risk of **depression** based on WHO-5 well-being instrument ([Madarasová Gecková et al., 2023](#))
- Mental health **services** and education are **available only for limited number of young people** in many countries.



What is the role of psychology education in supporting and promoting mental health in young people?



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Mental health literacy (MHL)

- Mental health literacy (MHL) covers a variety of **knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to mental health**, including, e.g., knowledge about mental health and mental disorders, attitudes, and skills related to the prevention of mental health problems, self-help, self-care, or help-seeking behaviors.
- **Individuals who studied psychology report higher levels of MHL** and lower levels of self-stigma related to professional help-seeking, which is considered a protective factor.

(Jorm, 2000, 2012; O'Connor et al., 2018; Sokolová, 2023, 2024)



Study background

- **Data collection:** online questionnaire
- **Method:** content analysis of curricular documents (23 courses)
- **12 European countries:** Austria, Czechia, England, Germany, Greece, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Scotland, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Sweden



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Main findings: brief overview

- **Mental health topics** are included in education in all countries.
- **Psychology as a standalone** subject is available in 10 countries.
- Psychology and mental health subjects **are not available for all students, they are not compulsory.**



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Categories of mental health education

Main categories	Subcategories
Mental health education as part of the psychology course	Approaches and explanations, Mental health disorders and diseases, Addictions, Stress and coping, Therapies and treatment, Mental hygiene
Mental health education as part of health education	Healthy lifestyle, General health prevention, Prevention of addictions, Understanding different aspects of health, Stress and coping
Mental health education as part of personal development courses	Social and emotional education, Social skills and social support, Bullying and discrimination, Resilience, Relationships and sex education
Mental health education as a standalone course	Understanding mental health and well-being, Mental health disorders and diseases, Destigmatization of mental health, Positive psychology, Stress and coping, Coping strategies and informed choices, Resilience and personal responsibility, Self-help and help-seeking

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Discussion and conclusion

 Mental health topics are represented in the high school curriculum.

 Availability of mental health education is limited.

  Mental health topics are fragmented across multiple subjects.

 There is still focus on mental disorders and illnesses (*potential risks and „prevalence inflation hypothesis“*).

  Mental health education in schools is supplemented by external institutions.



Implications

- ✓ Communication and cooperation across subject areas.
- ✓ Focus on positive mental health and help-seeking efficacy rather than mental disorders and illnesses.
- ✓ Discussing and addressing the potential risks of mental health awareness and education.
- ✓ Designing evidence-based research on the impact of mental health education in schools.



References

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Thank you for your attention.

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