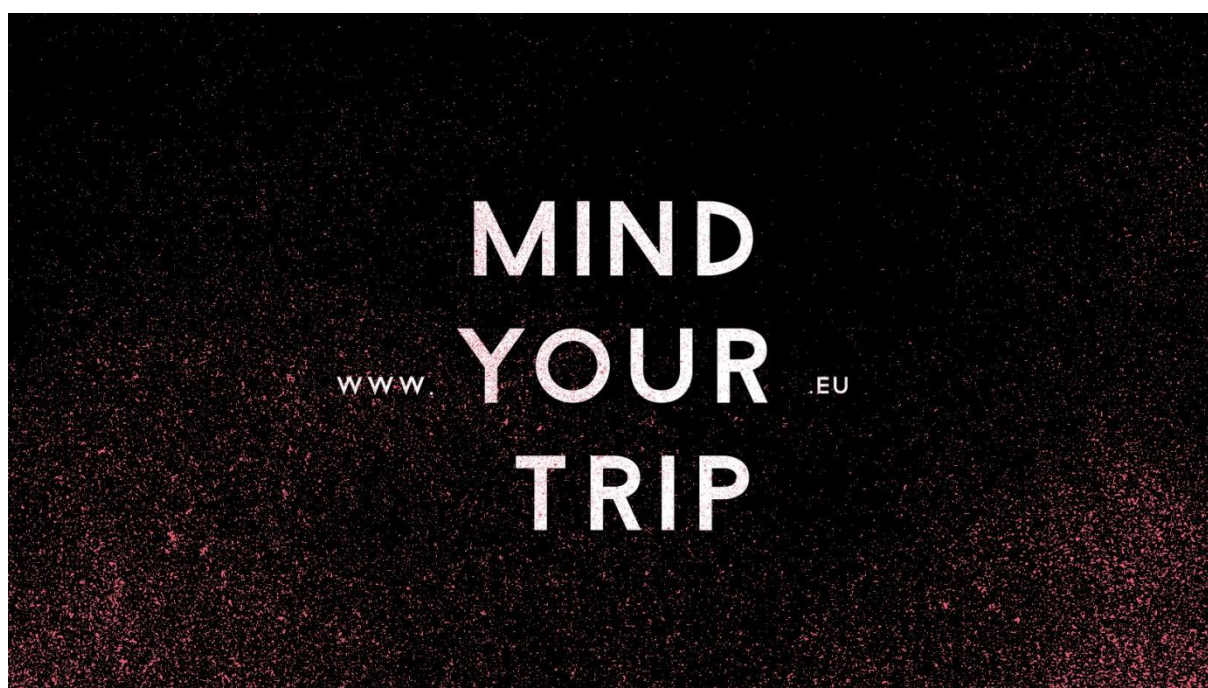




Click for Support – REALized: a joint web-based intervention for young consumers of New Psychoactive Substances

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1. Taking a look back – results of CFS-REALized

With important results to reflect on, the 'Click for Support - REALized' project has come to an end. In this third and last project newsletter, we will inform you about the main outcomes of this 2-year EU-project, and the future plans for web-based intervention (WBI) 'MindYourTrip' which has been developed, operated and evaluated during this project.

Starting in January 2017, the main goal of this EU-project has been to develop a WBI as an online preventive intervention offer for young (14-25 years) European consumers of New Psychoactive Substances (also known as 'legal highs', 'research chemicals', or 'designer drugs'). MindYourTrip has been developed in cooperation with Dutch IT company Wild Sea, and was operated between June and October 2018, after which the WBI has been evaluated. Results of this evaluation have been presented during the Final Conference in Münster, Germany, last November.

Regarding the six main goals of Click for Support - REALized, the following can be concluded:

1. "Collecting and sharing good practices on prevention in the field of NPS"
 - ✓ Worldwide, prevention offers (partially) focusing on New Psychoactive Substances have been collected and a total of 23 prevention programmes were found. From these programmes information on how to reach, communicate with, and motivate the target group were gathered. The results of this good practice research have been summarized in the project report 'Results on Good Practice Research' ([available](#) on the project website).
2. "Increase the WBI's acceptance among the target group"
 - ✓ The partners have conducted two rounds of national Focus Group sessions with members of the target group (young NPS- and/or drug users): the first round in 2017 to inform the initial development of the WBI, and the second round in 2018 to test the Bèta version of MindYourTrip. The project group has reached a total of 377 target group members. The development of MindYourTrip as well as its promotion have been informed by the expressed preferences of the target group to increase their acceptance of the WBI. Reports on both rounds of national focus groups can be found on the project website: [here](#) and [here](#).
3. "Development of a WBI for New Psychoactive Substances"
 - ✓ From July 2017 onwards, MindYourTrip has been developed. The final product is a responsive website and app for mobile devices, including information about NPS, their effects and risks, legal issues concerning NPS, and most importantly the intervention programme with three modules: Get Insight (brief intervention), Safer Use (harm reduction), and Quit or Reduce. The WBI has been operated between June and October 2018 in the 13 EU partner countries and in 11 languages. Options for continuation of the WBI have been discussed during the Final Conference in November 2018.





4. "Enabling prevention experts to work in web-based selective prevention"
 - ✓ In April 2018, 15 European prevention experts received a 2-day training in online counselling by Dutch partner Tactus where they were enabled to technically operate the WBI. In addition, they received training in online counselling and Motivational Interviewing. An English-language training manual has been made available through the project website. The CfS-REALized project has thus indeed ensured prevention experts to be able to work in web-based selective prevention, in this case for NPS. For the coming 6 to 12 months at least, the website and mobile app will remain available for use in all 13 partner countries.

5. "Reaching the target group (young NPS consumers)"
 - ✓ Led by Belgian project partner CAD Limburg, a promotional strategy was developed for the project partners in order to promote the intervention offer among the target group. To this end, a promotional card with concise information regarding the website and app was disseminated for instance at music events for youth. Furthermore, social media accounts for MindYourTrip were created and moderated by the Belgian partner on Facebook and Instagram.

6. "Evaluating the effectiveness of the WBI (outcome evaluation)"
 - ✓ MindYourTrip was evaluated based on the data from the 13 European partner countries, collected between June and October 2018. Although the WBI generated 68 registrations for intervention modules, no modules were finalised by the end of October 2018. Therefore, effectiveness in terms of reducing NPS use could not be measured yet. Nonetheless, there have been sign-ups to the intervention programme, the app was downloaded 104 times, the website visited almost 100.000 times by over 15.000 visitors, the self-test filled out 283 times, and NPS users were reached as over half of the participants reported using NPS (besides other drugs).

Read more below on the experiences of three project partners regarding their participation in this EU-project, their experiences with using and promoting the WBI, and the foreseen future of 'MindYourTrip'!

2. Digitalization: Desire and Reality

Both the development and the final product MindyourTrip as a WebApp tool have met with a positive response among practitioners from the areas of prevention, counselling and youth work. In principle, due to the limits of the traditional face-to-face approach there is a strong interest in reaching young drug users through digital solutions. However, practitioners thinking beyond the concept of digital possibilities are also facing limitations. In (counselling) reality, tightly clocked financing for contracted skilled services combined with high administrative efforts make



operational implementation difficult. A system that defines tight geographical borders and is mainly financed by local governments struggles with digital, transregional approaches. Online consulting in Vienna for a client from Tyrol for instance would probably not be financed. In this case, the structures and systems are (still) behind the (digital) standard.

Addiction prevention in Austria is currently expanding its range of services and testing the use of an online course (cannabis reduction) for young adults and an SMS-based coaching program (life skills and tobacco) for trainees and vocational school students. The former, in particular, works strongly with gamification strategies, bonuses and social-sharing components in addition to secure content in order to keep the motivation on the programme as high as possible. The interplay of knowledge transfer and entertainment is currently an important factor in keeping people engaged in the long term. Although workshops are offered in parallel to the SMS coaching program, there is largely no offline contact.

Linking online and offline as an opportunity

MindYourTrip could potentially position itself as an additional online service that is conceptually linked to traditional counselling. "Blended Counseling" mixes classic counselling with digital counselling. Clients have the opportunity to switch from online counselling to a face-to-face offer. Hereby, not only existing fears of threshold and shame could be reduced; other potential goals could entail reducing contact breakdowns or improving follow-up care.

A further development of "MindYourTrip" could consider the "Blended Counseling" approach - which has great potential - both strategically and operationally - together with its opportunities and challenges.

Mag. (FH) Andreas Reiter, MA
 pro mente OÖ – Institut Suchtprävention

3. Mind Your Trip in Cyprus

Click for Support REALized has been a wonderful trip for us here in Cyprus. All summer long, we have been engaged with young people; what's better than that? We were granted access to music festivals and art events and we had fun informing everyone of what NPS are and what our web-based intervention (WBI) "MindyourTrip" (MYT) can do for them. We went to university events and handed out our colorful "Mr. Trippie" cards, discussing matters of health and addiction-free lifestyle. We left cards at bars, cafeterias and clubs. We presented the website to business people as well as mental health professionals.



Finally, we have persuaded entrepreneurs to finance the continuation of MYT in Cyprus. We also spent hours and hours on the arduous task of fixing the website, then breaking it, then fixing it again.



Our engagement with MYT has given us numerous first experiences: We discovered the world of e-health, we ran focus groups in the streets and squares where people who use psychotropic substances hang out. Also building the website, adding and removing texts, and trying it out was something new for us.

You would ask, what was the outcome of this work? Well... we didn't have much luck with the WBI! There was almost no interest in signing up and use the intervention modules. However, we did manage to catch the eye and the ear of many young people. We talked a lot about NPS and it was obvious that the topic was something entirely new for them. And their interest did not stop there - people started checking out the MYT website! When the time came to count the visitors of our page, we had reached almost 700 people. Cyprus has a population of 750 000 individuals and thus, 700 is not such a small of a percentage.



Contemplating why those visitors still did not sign up for the modules, we reached the conclusion that e-health is not something Cypriots are familiar with (yet!). MYT is actually the first platform in Cyprus (not only in addiction prevention) offering a complete WBI. We believe that it will take some time for people to become accustomed to it, to trust it and start using it. However, the number of people interested in the website and checking it out leaves us hopeful for the future.

Being the only web-based intervention in Cyprus in the field of addiction that offers information, self-test, asynchronous communication and a complete intervention, we have realized that MYT would be a useful addition to the services offered in Cyprus in addiction prevention and that it would fill a gap in this field. For this reason, KENTHEA wants to keep offering the services of MYT beyond the project duration. It provides the opportunity for people to get help whenever they want, from wherever they are. The prevalence of drug use has been increasing for the last years among younger ages. A website with catchy graphic, reliable information and judgment-free support is the best way to attract young ones and give them the opportunity to educate themselves and ask for anonymous support when they need it.

When continuing to run MYT, it will be important to expand the psychoeducational material to cover all illicit psychotropic substances which might also help attracting more NPS users. In our discussions with young people during the focus groups, we realized that they might use NPS, but





don't actually know that what they are using is NPS. By losing the strict focus on NPS and informing about psychotropic substances in general, they can engage, read, and understand more. Besides that, the three intervention modules can be of great help to people using/abusing any sort of psychotropic substance.

Overall, we want to keep MYT running. We need it focused on substance addiction; full of reliable information about all illicit psychotropic substances. Our goal is to reach people through MYT who would otherwise not visit a therapy center and provide them with the necessary information to start contemplating on the idea of minimizing or stopping the use of psychotropic substances, either through MYT or through referral to a therapy center. We look forward to seeing it being used by more and more people!

Ioanna Hadjicharalambous & Pantelitsa Nikolaou
 KENTHEA, Cyprus

3. Online and running - experiences with mindyourtrip.eu in Germany

After the simultaneous launch in June 2018 in every participating country, the website www.Mindyourtrip.eu has reached out to NPS drug consumers in Germany. On the German subsite information on the effects and risks of consumption of different NPS, a self-assessment test for users as well as a 30-day intervention program operated by national prevention experts were offered. We also established a national Instagram account to promote the online intervention and sent flyers/promotional cards to over 300 drug counseling centers in Germany. From these actions we received positive feedback through other professional stakeholders and multipliers who rated our project and the opportunity for young drug consumers to receive online interventions concerning their drug use in a positive way.

However, concerning the contact to NPS-drug users through Mind Your Trip, our expectations were not met entirely. During the evaluation period from June to October 2018 the website Mindyourtrip.eu was clicked on over 25,000 and almost 5,300 visitors stayed on the site. While these numbers show interest and acknowledgement, not as many members of the target group of young NPS consumers have signed up for any part of the intervention as initially hoped for.

Here we counted more self-test and DUDIT inquiries than signups for intervention. Contact was also made directly through contacting us via email. Questions from the young target group arose around subjects like legal issues, the treatment of drug-withdrawal and side effects of NPS. Staying in contact with other online-interventions on the NPS subject in Germany like www.legal-high-inhaltsstoffe.de showed us that inquiries or questions were made at every online-intervention offer at the same time – concluding that potential clients tend to reach out to more than one support. People who reached and enrolled in the intervention in the Germany were usually older than the estimated target group and in general consumed other legal drugs than NPS.





Furthermore, we made the experience that running an online intervention comes with technical issues which need to be constantly taken care of. Improvements on the app and homepage were also found necessary, while alterations could not be achieved during the evaluation phase. Nevertheless, there was time to discuss these issues at the final conference in Muenster in November, to which each participating member and country added their experience.

In conclusion for Germany, we achieved attention through the launch of the website mindyourtrip.eu – but did not reach a significant amount of NPS drug users yet. Question stays, if this special group of drug consumers will be reached through online intervention in the kind of context which mindyourtrip.eu is offering at the moment. The situation in Germany in particular, in which with www.legal-inhaltsstoffe.de and www.info-neue-drogen.de two other online intervention exist in the field of NPS-intervention has to be reflected from a supply and demand point of view in the future.

Altogether it became clear – being online and running the intervention alone does not automatically gain NPS-consumers' attention for the intervention. Promotion, adaptations towards the target groups and staying online for a longer period than the evaluation phase will be necessary to prove further use and acceptance of this new online prevention offer.

Due to internal organisational reasons, the project partners of the LWL-Universitätsklinik Hamm decided in accordance with the project coordination at the LWL-Coordination Office for Drug-Related Issues that with the end of project duration of Click for Support-REALized in January 2019, the German support of the website will no longer be provided by the LWL-Universitätsklinik Hamm. We thank our fellow partners in the program, from whom we learned, with whom we achieved milestones and from whom we received a lot of support during the project. We wish every partner reaching out to young NPS consumers online a lot of success in the future!

Moritz Noack
LWL-Universitätsklinik Hamm, Germany





4. Project partner organisations



Athina Ygeia – Center for Prevention of Addictions & Promotion of Psychosocial Health, Greece



LWL – Coordination Office for Drug-Related Issues, Germany



CAD – Centra voor Alcohol- en andere Drugproblemen, Belgium



CePT – Centre de Prévention des Toxicomanies, Luxembourg



Education Centre for Families and Schools, Latvia



EHYT – Finnish Association for Substance Abuse Prevention, Finland



Forum Prävention, Italy



Institut Suchtprävention – pro mente Oberösterreich, Austria



IREFREA - Instituto Eurpeu para o Estudo dos Factores de Risco em Crianças e Adolexcentes, Portugal



LWL-Universitätsklinik Hamm – der Ruhr-Universität Bochum – Klinik für Kinder und Jugendpsychiatrie, Germany



Kenthea – Center for Education about Drugs and Treatment of Drug Addicted Persons, Cyprus



National Institute of Public Health, Slovenia



Prevention V&P, Slovakia



Tactus Addiction Treatment, Netherlands



Wild Sea, Netherlands

The European partner organisations involved in the 'Click for Support – REALized' project.





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- disclaimer -

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