

How to promote the well-being of teens in times of war?

Lviv Polytechnic National University strives to find out in a new WELLTEENS project

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In the present Europe is facing the still ongoing war in Ukraine and the refugee crisis. Around 4.8 million people, including teenage girls and boys (who are in the age which does not require the fight duty) were forced to leave their homes and are trying to adapt to a new life in the host countries. All this leads to poorer mental and physical health continuing into adulthood. Without the early support of mental health services, a high proportion of refugee children are at risk of educational disadvantage and poor social integration in host countries, potentially affecting their life course. The WELLTEENS project's main idea at self-help, peer-support and examining the challenges of teens as GEN Z.

The aim of WELLTEENS project is to create free, accessible and user-friendly psychoeducational materials including videos and APP for teenagers with refugee background in Europe, now notably from Ukraine, addressing their trauma coping, emotions tracking, sense of belonging, peers support and well-being needs. The main objective is to create and promote a publicly available mental health support system for teenagers with refugee or migration background who are in need of psychological help but cannot afford it or are not sure how and where to ask for it or is not available.

The mental well-being of teens in war primarily depends on the speed of the help provided to them, taking into account the characteristics of their generation, and the availability of these tools. Therefore, the priority is to provide quickly accessible options, such as online therapy or self-help guides. The project coordinator for LPNU Anna Shilinh adds: „Thus, using these tools to help teens will help them get the help they need quickly and maintain their mental and physical health.“

Lviv Polytechnic National University, together with partners from Poland, Bulgaria, Italy, Czech Republic and Spain, will be working on a support system of the teenagers' well-being by focusing on the work with emotions, trauma and education about it.

The project will conclude with three main concrete results. First, series of videos of teenagers with the experience of migration and their peers from the host countries, the study will develop insights into the teenagers' lives on an even deeper level. So, the project will engage teenagers themselves to help them express their experiences as immigrants and refugees. Second, a psychoeducational APP will help teenagers with their problems, e.g. to develop healthier strategies of dealing with their emotions and to understand themselves better. It will also provide contacts on mental health services they can use in the host country. Third, to gather valuable feedback, identify any issues, and make necessary refinements to ensure that the resources are tailored to the specific needs of refugee and host country teenagers.

The WELLTEENS project emerges from the collaboration of 6 countries, one of which is Ukraine and the others are host countries for refugees and immigrants: Czech Republic, Poland, Italy, Spain and Bulgaria. 6 European countries, including Ukraine. The participation of a Ukrainian partner will ensure that the results are adapted to the needs of adolescents at war. This way, the results will also be usable for teens from other countries hit by a crisis. For more information about this project, you can visit the <https://www.wellteens.eu/> website.

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