PRESS RELEASE

Results of the "Hold On" Project: Fostering Access to Mental Health Support for Young People

The "Hold On" project aimed to improve young people's access to informal peer mental health services in non-medical settings at both national and European levels.

Project Objectives

The project focused on:

✅ Enhancing youth access to and engagement with mental health support services.

✅ Encouraging young people to build informal peer support networks.

✅ Assisting professionals in creating supportive environments for youth mental health.

✅ Promoting the exchange of best practices and raising awareness about youth mental health.

The project targeted young people aged 14-29 and professionals working with youth in non-medical service settings. All project resources and outputs were made available in multiple languages: English, French, Greek, Polish, Macedonian, and Albanian.

Key Project Achievements

1. *E-learning Course on Mental Health & Well-being*

Following an in-depth needs assessment, a free online course covering key mental health topics was developed. The course consisted of six modules:

- What is peer support?
- Building resilience and coping strategies
- Understanding mental health disorders
- Identifying signs of mental health challenges
- Providing emotional support

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- Self-care and self-management in peer support

The course was piloted in all partner countries with **121 young participants**, who provided feedback on its clarity, accessibility, and real-life application.

2. Mentorship Programme

A structured **mentorship programme** was developed to create a safe, stigma-free space where young people could openly discuss their mental health. These sessions fostered peer support networks, offering guidance, encouragement, and meaningful discussions on mental well-being.

The programme was implemented across all partner countries, engaging **57 young participants** who received mentorship, support, and practical strategies to navigate mental health challenges.

3. International Conference in Athens, Greece

The mentoring programme culminated in an **international conference** titled "The Voice of Youth: Peer Support in Mental Health." The conference provided a platform for young people and professionals to exchange ideas and share best practices. A total of 42 participants attended, representing all partner countries.

4. Hold On Handbook for Professionals

An in-depth transnational research report was conducted across all six partner countries, through desk research and interviews with key informants working in non-medical youth service

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settings, providing valuable insights that shaped the Hold On Handbook, a comprehensive resource developed to empower professionals working with young people outside the medical field. Designed as a practical guide, the Handbook covers six key topics along with interactive activities to enhance professional capacity:

- Peer Support
- Self-care Practices
- Building Resilience
- Communication
- Emotional Intelligence
- Identifying & Coping with Challenges

The Handbook was piloted across all partner countries, involving 105 professionals in capacity-building activities, equipping them with tools and strategies to better support youth mental health.

5. National matchmaking days

In each partner country, a National Matchmaking Day was hosted, providing a platform for professionals to better understand young people's ideas for founding and operating support groups, while exploring ways to support them. This event offered a unique opportunity for both young people and professionals to connect, exchange experiences, and share best practices on the importance of peer support in mental health, with a total of **145 participants** across partner countries.

6. Hold On Platform for Exchange

An interactive **online platform** was created, allowing young people to discuss and express their views on mental health topics. The platform was tested with **100 stakeholders** and refined based on user feedback to ensure accessibility and engagement.

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7. Policy Review and Recommendations

The project produced the **HOLD ON Policy Landscape and Recommendations Paper,** mapping key national and EU-level stakeholders in youth mental health. It also provided **recommendations** on strengthening policy responses and fostering collaboration.

8. Advocacy activities

To advocate for improved youth mental health support, each partner organization organized two advocacy activities, engaging **approximately 100 stakeholders** across all partner countries. These activities aimed to influence public policies, resource allocation, and decision-making, and included:

- Informative sessions
- Panel discussions
- Exhibitions
- Conferences
- Social media campaigns
- Workshops

Access All Project Resources

For more details, explore our resources and project results:

www.holdonproject.eu

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