



D4.1. Youth - Choose Council Manifesto



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CHOOSE LIFE

**Implementing a drug-(ab)use prevention program & shaping youth policies
with disadvantaged young people for psychosocial well-being promotion**

D4.1 - D7 - Youth-Choose Council Manifesto



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Table of Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviation	Meaning
EU	European Union
EC	European Commission
YCC	Youth-Choose Council

Executive Summary

Choose Life Manifesto is creation of local Youth-Choose Council members from Italy, Poland, Greece, Portugal, Cyprus and Serbia, containing youth-informed policy recommendations. It highlights the needs of at-risk youth and proposes necessary actions to improve preventive programs and social-welfare initiatives. Thus, urging that drug-related issues receive priority in local government plans, contributing to stronger, more cohesive responses to the challenges facing the community. The manifesto was created throughout collection and feedback gain from young people participating in the Choose Life project activities. Through thorough analysis and conversations, we have explored youth perspectives, local needs, challenges, opportunities and priorities related to mental health and social inclusion. This document showcases youth recommendations on how to fight stigma, discrimination, drug abuse, social isolation and lack of awareness that remain barriers to youth mental well-being as well as limited access to health care, inadequate funding and fragmented support systems.

Main problems highlighted by young people are: too much pressure from school obligations and busy schedule; lack of psychologists and mental support in schools; being unsafe when going out; drug trafficking; regulation of film; series and music industry; peer pressure; long waiting time for mental health doctors; lack of public doctors; lack of support for mental health and wellbeing; the availability of drugs especially to minors; school dropouts, life and social media pressure.

What to do? Youngsters propose: organize interactive and raising awareness activities; install cameras and increase public security; implement school prevention lessons among young people; inform about new practices regarding drugs and drugs users; provide in school support; enhance youth mental health problems validation; regulate drugs seeing / presence online; organize / establish support groups for victims; establish free youth spaces; establish free platform for obtaining reliable and confidential information; mainstream mental health and wellbeing; provide education for families; provide education about drug abuse consequences; gamify raising awareness and education related to drug abuse; ensure free psychological support; provide better support and rehabilitation for people with addiction; create shelters for users; regulate and fight local criminal organization; provide and ensure better protection of minors; enhance school and public spaces.

Preventive and person-centred approach, increase of health literacy, early intervention, promotion of open mental health conversations, improvement of education and social services were main messages and needs these young people wanted to communicate. Youngsters emphasised early life intervention across schools and communities, better coordination across sectors, long term investments and partnerships by local and EU decision makers, supportive peers and families, creation of safe spaces and strong social connections as well as participation opportunities as best responses and solutions to their needs. A shared vision was created, for collective societal responsibility rather than individual concern.

Choose Life Manifesto

Many opportunities yet even more uncertainties.

We are a generation growing up with pressure to succeed.

We are a generation living in a world of comparisons.

Online pressure.

Lonely, even though constantly and more than ever connected.

Our minds challenged every step of the way.

To many youngsters struggle in silence.

Too much stigma instead of understanding.

Too many days go by in wait for help.

Too many encounter drugs before support.



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We refuse to accept this as normal.

Prevention has no place for fear, blame and punishment.

It has to happen much earlier.

It has to start with conversations, with feeling safe, to unburden our minds.

It has to start with healthy community, trusted adults, supportive friends, educated teachers, meaningful opportunities and access to timely help.

We believe every young person deserves these foundations.

We declare that:

Mental health and wellbeing is a human right, not a privilege.

Seeking support and help is act of strength not weakness.

Every young person deserves quality, free and timely mental health care, no matter who they are or where they live.

Education should prepare us for life not only exams.

We should learn about resilience, emotional wellbeing and healthy relationships.

We need drug prevention free of stigma.

We need to be heard.

We need to cocreate policies that impact our realities.

We are valuable and our participation should not be and is not symbolic but essential.





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Communities should protect us.

Safe public spaces, youth centers, arts, sports, culture, work and opportunities should not be luxuries.

Reclaim spaces. Rebuild communities.

They are protective factors that strengthen our wellbeing and reduce vulnerability to seek escape in substance abuse.

There should be more compassion instead of discrimination, exclusion and shame.

Technology should protect us, not exploit us. Protect us from addictive online design, harmful content and the normalization of substance use across digital platforms.

Our governments need to fight harder against organized crime and drug trafficking.

Reduce availability of drugs, protect minors and strengthening community safety.

Protecting young people's futures.

We call on governments, schools, communities and European leaders to:

Invest in prevention as seriously as intervention.

Ensure rapid access to mental health support for every young person.

Strengthen schools by providing psychologists, trained teachers and safe environments where students can ask for help without fear.

Support parents, families and caregivers with knowledge, guidance and practical resources.

Create accessible youth spaces where belonging, creativity, sport, culture and participation can flourish.





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Promote education that replaces myths, stigma and fear with knowledge, dialogue and critical thinking.

Protect young people online by limiting the promotion and normalization of harmful behaviors.

Reduce inequalities so that geography, disability, income or social background never determine access to support.

Strengthen cooperation between health services, education, youth organizations, local communities and policymakers.

Recognize young people as partners in building healthier societies.

Our commitment:

We commit to supporting one another.

We commit to speaking openly about mental health.

We commit to rejecting stigma.

We commit to creating communities where asking for help is welcomed, where diversity is respected, and where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

We choose connection over isolation.

Knowledge over misinformation.

Hope over fear.

Community over exclusion.

Because prevention is not simply about saying “no” to drugs.



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It is about creating a society where every young person has countless reasons to say “yes” to life, to opportunity, to belonging, and to their future.

Together, we declare that the strongest prevention begins where we feel seen, supported and empowered. Together, we can build communities where every young person has the chance not only to avoid harm, but to flourish.

National recommendations

1. Greece

Schools, families and community organizations should support young people by guiding them. By helping young people we help prevent drug use which ensures a safer, healthier and more successful future. Through education, communication and positive activities, youngsters can avoid drugs and make better choices.

1.1 Recommendations for local governments

Fund youth centers

Create dedicated, safe, and accessible spaces where teens can hang out and receive guidance from trained counsellors. These centers can serve as a first point of contact for young people who need support but aren't ready to seek formal help.

Improve mental health access

Municipalities and local governments should work on making mental health services either free or highly affordable by hiring more local professionals and reducing waitlists. Ensuring that cost is never a barrier will allow more young people to seek the help they need early on.

Work with NGOs

Partner with non-governmental organizations to design and deliver targeted programs that address youth mental health at a community level. This collaboration is especially crucial for



reaching young people in remote areas, like smaller islands or isolated villages, where resources are often scarce.

Run awareness campaigns

Launch community-wide initiatives that normalize conversations around mental health and actively work to reduce the stigma that still prevents many young people from speaking up. These campaigns should be tailored to local culture and delivered through channels that young people actually use.

Increase school area safety

Support anti-bullying initiatives and help fund on-site school psychologists, creating an environment where students feel genuinely safe and heard. A secure school environment is a fundamental foundation for good mental health and healthy development.

1.2 Recommendations for education institutions

Integrate drug prevention into the curriculum

We need to start educating students about the dangers of substance abuse from an early age. The focus shouldn't just be on the risks, but also on practical life skills, like how to resist peer pressure and confidently say "no."

Empower and train teachers

Since educators spend the most time with students, they need proper training to spot the early signs of drug use. They should be equipped with a clear action plan, but more importantly, they need the skills to approach these sensitive conversations with empathy and zero judgment.

Expand school counselling services

Schools must be a safe space. Hiring more full-time psychologists will give students a reliable outlet to talk about their problems and get professional help for stress or underlying mental health struggles before things escalate.

Invest in sports and the arts

Keeping kids engaged after school is crucial. By funding extracurricular activities, whether that's football, painting, or music, we give them healthy outlets, a sense of belonging, and productive routines that naturally steer them away from drugs.

Break the taboo through open dialogue

We need to foster an environment where drugs aren't a forbidden topic. Students should feel completely safe asking questions or reaching out for help without the fear of being punished or misunderstood.

1.3 Recommendations for European leaders

Develop a unified EU prevention strategy

European leaders need a shared approach that prioritizes early education and prevention, ensuring all member states are working toward the same goals to reduce risks.

Increase funding for addiction research

Better data leads to better policies. Investing in research will help us understand addiction more deeply and design recovery programs that actually work across Europe.

Promote youth exchange programs

Initiatives that help young people travel and experience new cultures are vital. They build confidence, reduce social isolation, and encourage positive lifestyle choices, which naturally lowers the risk of harmful behaviors.

Strengthen cross-border cooperation

Individual countries can't beat drug networks alone. Real-time information sharing and coordinated law enforcement are essential to cut off supply chains and improve safety continent-wide.

Launch impactful awareness campaigns

We need modern media and school campaigns to educate the public, encourage safer choices, and ultimately remove the stigma around seeking addiction support.

2. Poland

The wellbeing of children and adolescents in Poland has become a critical area of concern in recent years. Evidence from national and international studies indicates a significant increase in mental health difficulties, emotional distress, and substance use among young people. These trends are shaped by structural, socio-economic, educational and legal factors that collectively influence the everyday functioning and long-term development of youth.

2.1 Recommendations for local government

Improve access to mental health services

Municipalities should expand youth mental health care by hiring more specialists, increasing funding for public services, and significantly reducing waiting times for therapy and psychiatric support. Services must be free or affordable so that no young person is excluded due to cost or delays. The President should sign and enact the legislation enabling children under 13 to independently access psychological support. The previous amendment—intended to grant autonomy to adolescents aged 13–17; it was submitted to the Constitutional Tribunal and did not enter into force, leaving minors without the ability to seek help when parental consent is unavailable or unsafe. The Government should formally revisit this legislative initiative, remind the public and Parliament of its importance, and reintroduce the proposal to ensure its adoption.

Strengthen community-based and early intervention systems

Local governments should invest in evidence-based early prevention programmes focused on stress management, emotional regulation, and substance use prevention. Community mental health centres should be expanded across regions, especially in rural areas with limited access to support.

Enhance cooperation between police, schools and NGOs

Local governments should establish formal cooperation mechanisms between police, schools and NGOs to improve early identification and communication regarding local drug distribution points. When law enforcement identifies locations where drug dealers operate, this information should be shared with schools and youth-serving organisations through secure channels such as electronic school communication systems (e-journals). This supports targeted prevention, safer school environments and coordinated community

Introduce stricter regulations on youth access to medications

Municipalities should advocate for national reforms addressing the growing problem of youth access to over-the-counter medications with psychoactive or harmful potential. Measures should include stricter age verification, limiting access to high-risk medications, mandatory pharmacist counselling and public education campaigns on medication safety.

Create youth-friendly spaces and centers

Municipalities should fund safe, accessible youth centers where young people can socialize, receive guidance, and access early psychological support. These spaces can serve as low-threshold entry points for prevention and intervention.



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Run awareness and anti-stigma campaigns

Local authorities should launch relatable, youth-oriented campaigns that normalize conversations about mental health and substance use. Communication should be non-judgmental and delivered through platforms and formats used by young people.

Strengthen regulation and prevention policies

Governments should introduce stricter regulations on alcohol and gambling advertising, while also prioritising long-term investment in youth mental health and addiction prevention system

2.2 Recommendations for education institutions

Integrate mental health education into the curriculum

Schools should provide comprehensive and mandatory education on mental health, emotional regulation, stress management, and substance use prevention. Students should learn practical life skills such as coping with pressure, making responsible decisions, and resisting peer influence.

Ensure access to school psychologists and counselling services

Every school should guarantee full-time access to qualified psychologists and counsellors. Support must be confidential, stigma-free, and available not only in crisis situations but also as early intervention.

Train teachers to identify and respond to risk factors

Teachers should receive regular, mandatory training to recognize early signs of emotional distress, addiction risks, behavioral changes and crisis indicators among students. Training must equip educators with practical, empathetic response strategies and clear procedures for referring students to appropriate support services. To ensure consistency and quality, national and local authorities should provide ready-to-use, professionally verified teaching materials, including: evidence-based lesson plans, youth-friendly educational content, interactive activities designed to engage students, “take-and-teach” KONSPEKTY that teachers can immediately implement in classrooms. These materials must be reviewed not only for substantive accuracy, but also for appeal and relevance to young people, ensuring that lessons are engaging, modern and aligned with current youth communication styles. High-quality, standardized resources will help teachers deliver effective prevention and wellbeing education across all regions.

Invest in well-being and extracurricular programmes



Sports, arts, volunteering, and interest-based activities should be actively supported, as they strengthen resilience, belonging, and identity. These activities act as protective factors against stress and substance use.

2.3 Recommendations for European leaders

Support mental health reforms across Member States

Ensure full implementation of EU-wide youth mental health standards across all Member States. The European Union should ensure that all Member States fully implement the youth mental health standards established in the 2023 *Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health*. While the framework outlines clear expectations regarding accessibility, early intervention, quality of care, digital safety, prevention systems and youth participation, implementation remains uneven across Europe. The European Commission should: monitor national progress through structured reporting mechanisms, require Member States to align national legislation with EU standards, provide targeted funding to support countries with slower implementation, issue corrective recommendations where gaps persist, ensure equal access to high-quality mental health services for all young people, regardless of region or socio-economic background. This oversight is essential to guarantee that the 2023 standards - covering early intervention, school-based mental health systems, digital protection, substance use prevention and youth rights are not optional guidelines but consistently applied foundations of youth wellbeing across

Fund youth-focused prevention programmes

EU institutions should invest in prevention initiatives addressing addiction, emotional well-being, substance use, and digital risks, with particular attention to challenges linked to social media and emerging technologies.

Regulate addictive digital mechanisms and platforms

The EU should introduce stronger regulations on addictive design features used by platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, creating safer digital spaces and better protecting young people's mental health. The EU has taken partial steps through the Digital Services Act (DSA) and Digital Markets Act (DMA), which regulate platform responsibility, transparency and content moderation. Yet neither DSA nor DMA directly prohibit addictive design features.

3. Cyprus

We need to create a society where every young person is supported early in life to make informed, healthy choices and avoid the path of drug addiction. Prevention should start within families, schools and local communities, offering young people the knowledge, confidence and emotional support they need to protect themselves. The values we should follow are sustainability, accessibility, acceptance and reduction of stigma and solidarity.

3.1 Recommendations for local government

Offer a parent support line

Local authorities should provide a support link where parents can call and ask questions when they need help with their child's behavior. This service could offer early guidance, emotional support and referral to appropriate professionals before challenges become more serious.

Create safe youth spaces in neighborhoods

Municipalities should create safe and accessible spaces where young people can go, spend time, talk about their concerns and receive support from trained youth workers or counsellors. These spaces can help young people feel heard, included and less isolated.

Train police and frontline professionals

Local governments should provide workshops for police officers and other frontline professionals to help them respond to young people and drug users with empathy, respect and understanding. This can reduce stigma and encourage a more supportive approach instead of punishment or rejection.

Launch national and local awareness campaigns

Municipalities should work together with NGOs, schools and social media influencers to create campaigns that reduce stigma around drug users, promote solidarity and encourage healthy lifestyles. These campaigns should speak in a language that young people understand and use platforms they actually follow.

Train key professionals in the community

Youth workers, social workers, teachers, police officers, health professionals and local authority staff should receive training on prevention, early warning signs, mental health and appropriate referral pathways. This will help communities respond faster and more effectively when a young person needs support.

Organize local awareness events

Local authorities should organize events in towns and communities to raise awareness among parents, young people and the wider public. These events can include open discussions, workshops, youth-led activities and testimonies from professionals or people with lived experience.

3.2 Recommendations for education institutions

Creative educational material

Schools can provide such resources like audio books, short movies and other creative resources that discuss friendship, feelings, peer pressure, and the significance of voicing out problems. Involving such educational tools will make it easy for young people to grasp preventive information and messages.

Provide long-term guidance and emotional support

Career counseling and psychological services should be available to students throughout their educational process. Such long-term guidance would help students cope with stress and make the right decisions, leading them to academic success.

Drug awareness through storytelling

When conducting drug awareness programs, it is essential to involve true stories as well as those of experience. Such a method will make students realize the implications of substance abuse.

Strengthen school counselling services

The schools need to have enough psychologists and counselors available so they can reach students in time, before the situation gets worse. It is important to ensure that it is confidential, available, and judgment-free.

Promote open dialogue without fear of being punished or shamed

The students need to be able to talk about drugs, their mental well-being, and potentially dangerous behavior without getting punished or judged. It is necessary to foster an environment where seeking help is considered a sign of strength.

3.3 Recommendations for European leaders

Create and finance a European Youth Prevention Strategy

Create and finance a European Youth Prevention Strategy focusing on prevention, early intervention, mental health, and substance use prevention efforts in all Member States.

Increase funding for youth mental health and prevention services

Increase funding for accessible youth mental health and substance abuse prevention programs to make sure that all young people, no matter where they live or what financial means they have, will get proper assistance.

Promote the exchange of good practices between countries

Foster best practice exchange and the dissemination of successful youth prevention projects among European states to let local communities benefit from other countries' experience.

Launch a European anti-stigma campaign

Initiate an anti-stigma European campaign regarding youth substance use, mental health, and social inclusion, promoting empathy and solidarity among young people.

Strengthen youth participation in policymaking

Foster youth participation in policy decision-making processes by creating favorable funding conditions for youth-led initiatives and youth participation processes.

4. Portugal

Drug use is a social and public health issue that requires a collective response. Communities, families and young people need to work together to promote mental health and prevent risky behaviors, grounded in education, empathy and respect. Young people often learn most effectively through lived experience and active participation.

4.1 Recommendations for local government

Foster Institutional partnerships

Strengthen and formalize collaboration between education, health, youth and social services to ensure more coordinated and coherent responses to drug prevention and mental health promotion.

Invest in capacity building of professionals

Invest in continuous training for teachers, youth workers, social and health professionals, focusing on early identification, mental health literacy, harm reduction, youth engagement and non-stigmatizing approaches.

Promote informal involvement of families

Promote accessible and informal ways of engaging families through community-based spaces and activities that encourage dialogue and reduce barriers to participation.

Standardization and access to referral networks

Improve clarity and coordination of referral pathways between services, ensuring better visibility, faster access to support and more effective inter-institutional communication.

Proximity between young people and the community

Strengthen youth connection to local communities through participation opportunities, intergenerational initiatives and inclusive local spaces that foster belonging and engagement.

4.2 Recommendations for education institutions

Peer sessions and horizontal relationships

Promote peer-led sessions and more horizontal relationships between students and educators, fostering dialogue, trust and shared responsibility in educational processes.

Capacity building of the educational community

Strengthen the skills and knowledge of the educational community, particularly through access to updated scientific evidence on drug prevention, mental health and adolescent development, ensuring more informed and effective responses.

Artistic, civic and political participation

Promote opportunities for artistic, civic and political engagement within schools, supporting young people to develop critical thinking, expression and active citizenship.

Informal involvement of families

Encourage more informal and flexible forms of family engagement in school life, fostering dialogue and collaboration without creating additional barriers to participation.

Problem-posing education approach

Promote a problem-posing educational approach inspired by Paulo Freire, encouraging critical reflection, dialogue and the co-construction of knowledge rather than purely transmissive models of education

4.3 Recommendations for European leaders

Sustainability of funding

Ensure continuity and long-term stability of funding schemes supporting youth work, prevention and mental health initiatives, avoiding short-term project cycles that limit impact and sustainability.

Regulation of artificial intelligence and social media

Develop and enforce clear regulatory frameworks for artificial intelligence and social media platforms, with a focus on protecting young people's mental health, data safety and exposure to harmful content.

Promotion of problem-posing education approaches

Encourage education systems across Member States to adopt problem-posing approaches inspired by Paulo Freire, fostering critical thinking, dialogue and active citizenship.

Awareness and accountability frameworks on drugs and addictions

Strengthen EU-level guidance and awareness strategies, supporting Member States in addressing different types of drugs and addictions through evidence-based, coordinated and accountable policies.

Regulation of smartphone use and promotion of alternative activities

Support the development of guidelines on the use of smartphones in educational and youth settings, alongside the promotion of meaningful alternative activities that encourage social interaction, wellbeing and engagement.

5 Italy

We are a generation that knows hardship, temptation, and absence. We know what it means to feel alone, to go unheard, and to search for a place where we truly belong. But we also know the power of human connection, of sharing music, of playing together until sunset, of public spaces filled with life, and of someone looking at you and saying, "You matter. You belong." We believe in a vibrant society built on connection rather than isolation. A society where no one has to seek in substances what they should be able to find in people, shared spaces, and opportunities that are accessible to everyone. That is why we call for the creation and revitalization of community centers, neighborhood libraries, and open educational services: places where children, young people, adults, and older generations can meet, play, take part in outdoor sports, learn from one another, and feel part of the same community.



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Because prevention does not begin when someone says "no" to substances. It begins when every person has the chance to say "yes" to meaningful relationships, to dreams, to opportunities, and to a future.

5.1 Recommendations for local government

Strengthen community spaces for prevention and wellbeing

Invest in the regeneration and renovation of safe, accessible, and inclusive public spaces. Libraries, cultural centers, sports facilities, and shared community spaces can foster participation, wellbeing, and the prevention of risky behaviors.

Involve young people in local decision-making

Establish structured mechanisms for dialogue between young people, local authorities, and public institutions. Meaningful youth participation helps ensure that policies reflect the real needs and priorities of the community.

Improve access to support services

Reduce administrative and bureaucratic barriers to make health, social, and prevention services easier to access. Ensure that free and accessible mental health support is available to all young people.

Strengthen community-based prevention

Develop outreach activities and community initiatives in areas where substance use is more prevalent. Work closely with NGOs, youth organizations, and community groups to design and implement effective prevention actions.

Promote transparency and cross-sector collaboration

Increase transparency and accountability in local policies related to substance use prevention and youth wellbeing. Foster strong partnerships between public institutions and civil society organizations to enhance the impact and sustainability of prevention efforts.

5.2 Recommendations for education institutions

Strengthen prevention and life skills education

Integrate comprehensive education on addictions, including substance use, digital addictions, gambling, and unhealthy relationships. Develop essential life skills such as critical thinking, emotional regulation, communication, self-awareness, and decision-making.





Ensure Mental Health Support in Schools

Provide continuous access to psychological counselling and mental health services within educational institutions. Offer regular training for teachers and school staff to strengthen prevention efforts and support the early identification of risk factors.

Promote Active Student Participation

Encourage students to actively contribute to the design and implementation of wellbeing and prevention initiatives. Promote peer education programmes as an effective way to foster youth leadership, shared learning, and engagement.

Build Inclusive and Community-Oriented Schools

Create school environments where students feel heard, respected, and connected to their community. Open school facilities beyond school hours to support community activities and provide safe spaces for young people.

Encourage Creative and Participatory Learning

Adopt creative, artistic, and experiential learning approaches that strengthen resilience, self-expression, adaptability, and problem-solving skills. These methods enhance student engagement while supporting personal and social development.

5.3 Recommendations for European leaders

Strengthen the regulation of digital platforms

Implement stronger measures to limit the promotion and normalization of substance use and other harmful behaviors on social media platforms. Foster a safer digital environment for young people.

Invest in prevention and public health

Increase investment in public health systems, prevention services, mental health support, and evidence-based addiction treatment programmes. Ensure equitable access to these services across all European regions.

Support community-based initiatives and social inclusion

Allocate dedicated funding to local initiatives that promote healthy lifestyles, social inclusion, and positive alternatives to substance use. Strengthen the role of community organizations in prevention efforts.

Raise awareness of organized crime and drug trafficking



Support communication campaigns, educational initiatives, and training programmes that increase public awareness of organised crime, drug trafficking, and their social consequences. Promote evidence-based prevention strategies across Europe.

Ensure meaningful youth participation in EU policies

Actively involve young people in the design, implementation, and evaluation of European policies on substance use prevention. Their perspectives should contribute to more effective, relevant, and inclusive policymaking.

6. Serbia

Most students in Serbia probably know at least a few people who use drugs. The reasons are different – curiosity, trying things out for fun, but also peer pressure, family problems, or struggles with mental health. A lot of young people who deal with substance use feel like they're alone or like nobody really understands what they're going through, but that's not true. There is always someone who can help, and reaching out for support is important. Even when it feels like there's no way out, things can change – and different choices are always possible.

6.1 Recommendations for local governments

Start a "Talk Corner" in every city

Provide continuous funding of quiet and safe rooms where every young person can speak with a trained peer or counselor any day, without the need for an appointment. Mental health crises can arise unexpectedly, and immediate access to support is essential, rather than having to wait weeks for a free appointment at a local primary healthcare centre.

Train parents to spot warning signs

Local authorities should support at least one practical workshop each year to help parents recognize the early signs of depression, anxiety, substance use, and other mental health challenges their children may be facing. Equipping parents with the knowledge results in understanding and timely support for their children.

Open youth clubs on weekends

Municipalities should provide continuous support for free and accessible youth spaces where young people can engage in music, sports, arts, and other creative activities in a safe and

welcoming environment. Positive social interaction helps reduce isolation, promotes wellbeing, and serves as an effective form of early prevention.

Install mental health first aid boxes in public spaces

Place visible and easily accessible mental health first aid boxes in city centres, youth hubs, and other public locations. Stock them with self-help resources, stress-relief items, crisis support information, and contacts for local mental health services. These simple, visible, low-cost interventions can raise awareness, reduce stigma, and help young people access support when they need it most.

Provide anonymous question boxes for young people

Install anonymous question boxes in schools and youth centres where young people can safely share their worries, problems or doubts. A psychologist or trained professional should provide weekly responses to common questions in a public format (without personal identifiers). This approach can lower barriers to seeking help and ensure early access to reliable information and support.

Fund mobile mental health support vans

Set aside funds for mobile mental health units that regularly visit small towns and rural villages, bringing psychologists and professionals closer to young people in underserved areas. These outreach services can provide early support, basic counselling and psychoeducation, reducing geographical barriers and ensuring more equitable access to mental health care.

6.2 Recommendations for education institutions

Ensure school security systems are functional and actively monitored

All surveillance cameras in schools should be fully operational, regularly maintained, and actively monitored, rather than installed as a formality. Only when used in this way can it contribute to a safer school environment.

Strengthen the role of school security in supporting student safety

Security staff should be clearly focused on ensuring a safe and supportive environment for students, rather than being perceived as purely symbolic figures. They need to be present, and approachable in order to provide protection for all students.

Normalize conversations about mental health in schools

Schools should actively promote open, informed, and stigma-free discussions about mental health among students and staff. Integrating mental health awareness can encourage early help-seeking and create a more supportive learning environment.

Provide students with more education about drugs

In all classes (not only biology and psychology), drugs should be discussed openly, while ensuring that students understand the risks, develop critical thinking skills, and feel empowered to make informed and safe decisions.

Train teachers to recognize early warning signs

Provide teachers with regular training to help them identify early signs of emotional distress, mental health challenges, substance use, and other risk behaviors among students. Strengthening teachers' capacity for early recognition can enable timely intervention.

6.3 Recommendations for European leaders**Develop shared education standards on mental health awareness and substance use prevention across Europe**

Leaders should support development of common guidelines and minimum standards that integrate mental health awareness, emotional wellbeing, and substance use prevention into education systems across Europe.

Increase funding for youth mental health services across Europe

Funding for accessible, high-quality mental health services for young people should be significantly increased and prioritized. This includes expanding early intervention services, community-based supports, school-based mental health services, and crisis response mechanisms.

Promote cross-country cooperation on youth mental health and prevention

Strengthen cross-country cooperation to improve the exchange of good practices, tools, and evidence-based approaches in youth mental health promotion and substance use prevention.



D4.1 Youth-Choose Council Manifesto

Develop stronger and more targeted prevention campaigns for young people

Invest in more impactful, evidence-based prevention campaigns addressing mental health, substance use, and related risk behaviors among young people. These campaigns should be youth-oriented, co-created with young people, and delivered through channels they actively use, including digital and social media platforms.

Provide cross-European training for early identification and prevention of mental health issues among young people

Development and implementation of joint training programmes for youth workers, teachers, healthcare professionals, and other relevant stakeholders across Europe should be supported. Trainings will strengthen the capacity to recognize early signs of mental health difficulties and risk behaviors, and to respond with timely, coordinated, and preventive interventions.

The 'Choose life' logo is centered on a white background with abstract yellow and blue splatters and brushstrokes. The word 'Choose' is in yellow and 'life' is in teal, both with dark blue drop shadows.

Choose life

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