

# Final Report, strategic level : Psychological Trauma

## 1. Outputs

We met our target with the following outputs:

- **Brochure**
- **Picture book "Lily, Ben and Omid"**
- **Videos**
- **Website**

All those outputs were realised and are easily accessible via website. The **brochure** is translated and published in all the partners' languages: English, Italian, Polish, Romanian, Swedish and Spanish. The **picture book "Lily, Ben and Omid"** exists in hard copies in English, Swedish and Romanian, additionally Arabic, Farsi and Tigrinya. Italian, Spanish and Polish translations of the book are recorded and are available on the website as voice recordings. **Videos** explaining the basics about trauma are accessible on the website, too. The website is clearly structured and kept up to date and provides a lot of information. It will be available minimum for the next 5 years.

- **Comic**

The **Comic**, another output mentioned in the project bid, was not realised. After the huge success of the picture book even among adolescents, there was no need to produce a comic.

- **Articles**

Articles were mostly published in the normal press rather than the educational press. The aim to disseminate our outputs has been realised steadily and the process is still ongoing.

- **Measuring stress at every school**

Those two goals were not completely reached. We abandoned the idea of checking the atmosphere on a general level and instead adapted the check to the individual needs of every school. Therefore this point is mentioned in the individual report of every partner school.

- **Checking if taking part in the project has a positive influence on the students' feeling of security**

We evaluated especially the students' feeling of safety at all the meetings and we always received excellent feed back. For the results please see [www.yestermorrow.eu](http://www.yestermorrow.eu), under the travel destination (e.g. Leksand) and "evaluation".

## 2. Effectiveness of our project

### 2.1 School level

#### 2.1.1 Good atmosphere / Safe place

Every partner school chose a topic to enhance the good atmosphere at school and focused on this within daily school life:

- To improve traditions and celebrations (Sweden)
- To use the same strategies and same approaches for the whole school (England)
- Extra-activities outside the School (Romania)
- To trust students (Italy)
- To improve Integration of new students just in the beginning (Poland)
- To include nature, trees, animals (Spain)

For examples of good practice, please see the brochure "Trauma and school" page 30 - 40

### **2.1.2 Better skills and better qualifications for more students**

- There is much more interest in other languages, especially among English students after meeting with partner schools and realising that students from other countries often speak more than one language.
- Prejudices have been replaced by the reality, especially the visit in Romania was a surprise for many students. They were overwhelmed by the beauty of this country and the kindness of the people.
- Topics were linked to students' life.
- Intergenerational skills of the „Time witness project“ helped to enhance relationships in families and to improve understanding of their own personal background.
- Cross cultural activities made students more open minded

Please see [www.yestermorrow.eu](http://www.yestermorrow.eu), following the travel destination (e.g. Leksand) and "evaluation". A very powerful example of what it means when a topic is linked to a personal life was the amazing story of the Italian coordinator Marzia, whose uncle survived as a prisoner of war in a concentration camp in the Polish partner town Przemysl. This coincidence were revealed during our project work. <https://cms.e.jimdo.com/app/s40c3c534e796713b/p09ef92a346839836?cmsEdit=1>

### **2.1.3 less ESL (Early School leavers)**

- Students improved their effectiveness, being involved in the project gave them more self confidence
- They were empowered by meeting other students and visiting other schools
- The good relationship with teachers and other students prevented them of early school leaving

During the project teachers and social workers learned more about the impact of stress on the brain and the vertebral structures. This proved to be a helpful tool for coping better with impaired students and challenging situations. The phenomenon of transferences was introduced too to a variety of staff at partner schools; it is helpful to avoid the re-traumatisation of students and stabilise them after a traumatic experience.

Please see the brochure "Trauma and School" page 10 - 39

### **2.1.4 Examples of good practices**

- All partner schools focused on examples of good practices to install a safe place

Please see the brochure "Trauma and School", e.g. page 39 and page 49

## **2.2 Local level**

### **2.2.1 Aims**

- Awareness among parents, grandparents, relatives about the protecting factors against psychological trauma

### **2.2.2 Actions and Results**

Hundreds of students were involved in this part of the project during the three years in 6 different partner schools. They talked to their parents, grandparents, wrote reports, collected photos, compared their results with historical facts.

## **2.3 Regional level**

### **2.3.1 Aims**

- The taboo around the topic of trauma will be broken

- Unnoticed and untreated trauma which lead very often to ESL will be a topic in newspapers and e.g. in expositions
- People will be more aware that taking care of their mental health is essential

### 2.3.2 Actions and Results

- England, Stevenage: Promoting the Lily, Ben and Omid book to some of our youngest students in our school  
 Sending copies to our feeder primary schools to help the students moving up to secondary school understand and cope with situations  
 We have been able to provide our school counselling team with copies of the book  
 The Local Authority for Children Looked After (CLA) have copies.  
 Marriotts school continues to provide a 'safe space' in school including the Sanctuary for vulnerable students, open areas including toilets, universal use of positive language (54321) see brochure  
 Promoting the Trauma brochure  
 Presenting assemblies on our project  
 Using social media in a variety of ways e.g. Whatsapp group Yestermorrow, School website, school facebook page, student links from meetings with social media and Wiki Website
- Italy, Rome: Using social media e.g. Whatsapp group Yestermorrow, School website, school facebook page, student links from meetings with social media and Wiki Website
- Poland, Przemysl: two conferences of teachers in Podkarpacie where the project is presented.  
 Radio interviews with the students taking part in the Erasmus meetings on the local radio Eska; there were programmes on the radio about the meeting in Przemysl  
 The project is promoted every year during Open Days at the school and during Promotion of the school when our teachers visit about 40 middle schools in Przemysl and the local area.  
 Visits to different schools to promote the topic "safe place" and mental health among students  
 Publishing reports in different newspapers and magazines
- Romania: Sura Mica, speech about trauma  
 Workshop about trauma  
 Dissemination in newspapers and magazines and on social media  
 Visits to different schools to promote the topic "safe place" and mental health among students
- Sweden: Leksand, the launch of the Swedish edition of Lily, Ben and Omid.  
 Two presentations about trauma for teachers and social workers  
 Dissemination of the book "Lily, Ben and Omid" and the brochure among teachers and social workers  
 Interviews and reports in newspapers and on social media
- Spain, Ceuta, information published on the school website, in newspapers and on TV channels

## 2.4 National level

### 2.4.1 Aims

- To increase awareness among teachers and social workers of the topic mental health and our good practices to improve resilience against psychological injuries

### 2.4.2 Actions and Results

See above. It was not always possible to identify properly whether the actions reached the regional or national level. The topic of trauma quickly passed the borders of our 6 partners countries and our material spread to areas and countries we had not expected. This was especially the case in areas with mentally stressful situations; e.g. Ukraine, Jemen, Uganda, but also in areas where there are many refugees, e.g. Germany, Switzerland, Jordania, Serbia.

## 3. Dissemination

Within these three years of the project 5000 picture books of "Lily, Ben and Omid" were distributed/sold. More than 6000 brochures of "Trauma and school" were given away, thousands of people had a look at the website or watched the different videos. Hundreds of people in the 6 involved countries took part at meetings talking about mental health and trauma.

All the partners made big and successful efforts to disseminate this part of the project. Please see: <https://cms.e.jimdo.com/app/s40c3c534e796713b/p2de9076ea415e089?cmsEdit=1>

## 4. A Special remark: Romania compared to Sweden

Despite the relentless engagement of the Swedish partner school it was very difficult to introduce the topic of trauma in the area of Leksand and in Sweden. There was no response when the Swedish partners approached newspapers, the educational press, governmental organisations... The partners from Leksand wrote: *„We have contacted the teachers' magazines again and sent them a book and a brochure and we also sent copies to the social worker at the hospital in Falun but no answers so far. We have also tried to contact the trauma centre of the national Red Cross but the same result there.“*

We were completely surprised that Swedish schools, governmental organisations and NGO working with asylum seekers were so repellent.

Only in the third year of the project the school in Leksand started to show some interest in the topic of trauma. The Swedish partners managed to organise a meeting for their teachers. The reactions after the lecture on trauma were very positive. Several participants pointed out that this was one of the best and most helpful presentation they ever heard. Only at the end of the project in July 2018 the national Red Cross contacted us and told us that they want to disseminate our brochure and picture book in 4 different rehabilitation centres.

In Romania the process was completely different. From the beginning the topic of trauma was accepted as extremely important for dealing with their students, especially with the students from a Roma village nearby where domestic violence and neglect is a big issue. The materials, books and brochures were highly welcome and dozens of people attended the lectures.

The differences especially between these two countries regarding the tabooed topic of trauma could not be bigger. We approached different international experts to discuss possible reasons for this, one of them is Prof. Dr. David Zimmermann, Humboldt University in Berlin. The hypothesis were discussed among the experts of the project and among the partners, too. They are the following ones:

### **Hypothesis 1: It might be linked to the historical background of the two countries**

After the difficult and traumatic past of the people in Romania (dictatorship of Ceausescu, World War I und II) Romanian people are aware that these incidents can have an impact on mental health. This knowledge became part of the national consciousness, which in turn might have increased the interest in the effect of psychological trauma on daily life at school and at day nursery. This process can lead to posttraumatic growth<sup>1</sup> and help to cope better with traumatic experiences in the future.

Sweden was not directly involved in WW I and II, therefore there are no historical links to trauma on a general level. Hence a psychological trauma might be considered as a problem of others and can be dissociated. There might be a general mindset that trauma is a topic for specific experts and that teachers are not competent even if they teach impaired students.

### **Hypothesis 2: It might be linked to the different cultures**

Sweden might have a culture of governmental and institutional bodies. Sweden probably has a tendency for problems to be solved by the government and institutions. Romania might have a culture of relationship. Romanian citizens probably refer to relatives, friends and family to solve problems.

### **Hypothesis 3: It might be linked to a special sense of community**

Sweden might traditionally have a high sense of community as a whole nation. On the one hand this attitude might empower Swedish people to integrate e.g. asylum seekers well. On the other hand there might be no space for extreme individual suffering. We witnessed that in those schools where teachers were very much group oriented ("We are all in the same boat"), these teachers could not deal with the extreme suffering of the most traumatised children. In plain terms traumatised children and adolescents might be inconsistent with the wish that a sane society can cope with everything. Therefore the Swedish society might be avoiding the topic of trauma.

## **5. Conclusion**

We are extremely happy to bring this project to such a good conclusion. Dissemination will go on, the brochure and the picture book are an excellent basis for the ongoing work. Additionally we identified interesting differences between the partner countries due to their different historical and cultural background. Nevertheless the outcomes and reactions showed the high relevance of the topic trauma in all the involved schools.

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<sup>1</sup> Exenberger S.: Positive Folgen von Traumatisierung, In: Juen, B., Kratzer, D., (Hsg), (2017): Krisenintervention und Notfallpsychologie, S. 117-129. Innsbruck: Studia Universitätsverlag