

Rehearsing the unknown

Erasmus+ cooperation partnership in the field of youth

Budget: €120,000

Duration: 18 months

Lead applicant: Youth Can Skopje (North Macedonia)

Profile of project partners:

1. *Partner organization 1 (Country 1):* An organization specializing in psychodrama, bringing expertise in using this technique for personal development and mental well-being. They will lead the development and delivery of the Train-the-Trainer (TNT) program, equipping youth workers and educators with skills to use psychodrama in non-therapeutic settings. Additionally, they will organize and implement psychodrama-based workshops in local high schools in collaboration with the TNT participants from their country.

Potential partner <https://psychodrama-for-europe.eu/> NGO Berlin, Germany

2. *Partner organization 2 (Country 2):* A company experienced in video production, who will manage the creation of the digital simulations of anxiety-inducing scenarios. They will handle the filming, editing, and post-production of the videos that effectively portray real-life situations.

Potential partner: ?

3. *Partner organization 3 (Country 2):* Youth organization focusing on mental health, providing insights into the target group's needs and supporting the implementation of project activities. They will assist the TNT participants in implementing psychodrama-based workshops in their local schools, offering guidance and expertise to ensure the effective application of the methodology in real-world settings.

Potential partner: <https://www.iasismed.eu/?lang=en> NGO Greece

4. *Partner organization 4 (North Macedonia):* A marketing agency that will develop and execute marketing strategy to promote the project, its activities, and outcomes. They will work closely with the lead applicant, Youth Can Skopje, to ensure effective dissemination and visibility of the project across various channels and target audiences.

Potential partner: Efectiva, North Macedonia

Target groups:

- High school students (ages 15-19)
- Youth workers, teachers, and psychologists working with young people on mental health and personal development.

Main objective:

To improve mental well-being and quality of life of young people by addressing their fear of the unknown through experience-based learning. The project will help youth confront anxiety-inducing situations by "living" these experiences through psychodrama-based workshops and digital simulations (videos) replicating real-life scenarios.

Specific objectives:

1. To explore the correlation between fear of the unknown and youth mental health through international research, identifying common anxiety-inducing situations among young people across different cultural and social backgrounds.
2. To equip youth workers and educators with skills to use psychodrama as a non-therapeutic tool for youth development and well-being by organizing an international Train-the-Trainer (TNT) program and implementing local psychodrama-based workshops in high schools.
3. To provide young people with accessible, digital resources that simulate real-life anxiety-inducing situations, helping them build confidence and coping strategies. These videos will offer step-by-step guidance, coping strategies, and expert insights, allowing youth to rehearse and mentally prepare for these experiences in a controlled, low-stakes environment.
4. To create open-source educational materials, including an online course with training materials, for youth workers and educators to ensure sustainability and long-term impact beyond the project's duration.

Relevance:

In today's rapidly evolving world, young people frequently face anxiety when dealing with new and unfamiliar situations. Fear of the unknown can lead to hesitation, avoidance, and mental distress, limiting personal and professional growth. This project aims to address this issue by using psychodrama and video simulations to help young people rehearse and prepare for these challenging moments.

Recent research, such as a pilot feasibility study conducted by Lund University in 2020, underscores the significant impact of fear on the mental health of young people. The study found that intolerance of uncertainty—a cognitive predisposition described as a fear of the

unknown—is highly associated with worry among adolescents. Interventions that included exposure to situations involving uncertainty led to significant reductions in self-reported worry, anxiety, depression, and intolerance of uncertainty, as well as improvements in global functioning. These findings suggest that addressing fear of the unknown can effectively enhance mental well-being in young people.

Work Packages:

WP1 – International research: Understanding fear of the unknown in youth mental health

- Conducting research in all partner countries to examine the correlation between fear of the unknown and youth mental health.
- Identifying common anxiety-inducing situations among young people across different cultural and social backgrounds.
- Producing a research report with key findings to inform subsequent project activities.

WP2 – Training for youth workers and educators in psychodrama techniques (in partner country 1)

- Organizing an international Train-the-Trainer (TNT) program for youth workers and teachers, led by Partner Organization 1, to equip them with skills for using psychodrama in non-therapeutic settings.
- Implementing local psychodrama-based workshops in high schools, where trained participants facilitate sessions under the guidance of experienced psychologists from Partner Organizations 1, 3 and Youth Can.
- Developing an open-source online course with training materials to allow more educators and youth workers to learn and apply the methodology beyond the project's duration.

WP3 – Rehearsing the unknown: video simulations of anxiety-inducing situations

- Creating a series of videos, managed by Partner Organization 2, simulating real-life situations that young people often find stressful (identified through research). Examples include first gynecologist visit, first job interview, speaking in public, and first time living alone.
- Providing step-by-step guidance, coping strategies, and expert insights in the videos to help young people rehearse and mentally prepare for these experiences.
- Sharing the videos on existing platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, making them accessible to youth across different countries.

WP4 – Final Conference (in North Macedonia)

- Organizing an international closing conference in North Macedonia to present project outcomes, streamed online for all partner countries.
- Inviting youth workers, educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals to discuss project findings and potential applications.
- Showcasing the research results, video simulations, and training materials.
- Facilitating panel discussions, workshops, and networking sessions to encourage knowledge exchange and sustainability of project outcomes.

WP5 – Dissemination

- Promoting the video simulations through social media campaigns, guest appearances in youth-focused events, and collaboration with youth organizations and educational institutions.
- Hosting local screening events in associated schools and community centers where students and educators can watch and discuss the simulated scenarios.
- Engaging stakeholders (educators, mental health professionals, policymakers) to support the integration of project outcomes into national mental health and education strategies.
- Developing an online knowledge hub on partners' websites where all project resources, including research findings, training materials, and video simulations, will be freely accessible for long-term use.

WP6 – Project management

- Coordinated by the lead applicant, Youth Can Skopje, to ensure smooth implementation, communication, and reporting throughout the project lifecycle.

Expected Impact:

- Increased awareness and understanding of fear-related anxiety among young people.
- Improved mental well-being and resilience among youth facing life transitions.
- Strengthened capacity of youth workers and educators in using psychodrama techniques.
- Greater accessibility to innovative, digital resources supporting youth mental health.