



Highlights from the roundtable
**Public health issues and
creative approaches to engage young people**



21st April 2016
European Parliament





Background

Unhealthy lifestyles are widespread among teenagers. Teens are notoriously difficult to reach through traditional communications means. Communication must be on their terms and in a language they understand and relate to.

On April 21st 2016, the Boys and Girls Plus project organized the roundtable “Public health issues and creative approaches to engage young people”, an opportunity to kick start a discussion on the potential and the perspectives of prevention programmes that use creative content and approaches to communicate and engage younger generations.

The event took place at the European Parliament in Brussels. It was hosted by Bart Staes MEP (BE, Greens/EFA) and was organized in the framework of the **Boys and Girls Plus** project.

Boys and Girls Plus

Boys and Girls Plus is an EU funded project aimed to develop and evaluate an innovative prevention programme for young people aged 13-19. It provides teachers and youth workers across Europe with a set of innovative online and offline tools to creatively engage teens on healthy lifestyles and raise awareness on the risks associated with drug use.

The project involves 10 organizations from 9 European countries: University College Ghent (Belgium), AIDS Fondet (Denmark), Business Solutions Europa (Belgium), Center for the Prevention of Addiction & Psychosocial Health Promotion (Greece), Charles University (Czech Republic), EDEX Centro de Recursos Comunitarios (Spain), Gesellschaft für angewandte Sozialforschung (Germany), Institute for Research and Development UTRIP (Slovenia), Maas Research and Consulting (Austria) and Mentor Foundation (United Kingdom)



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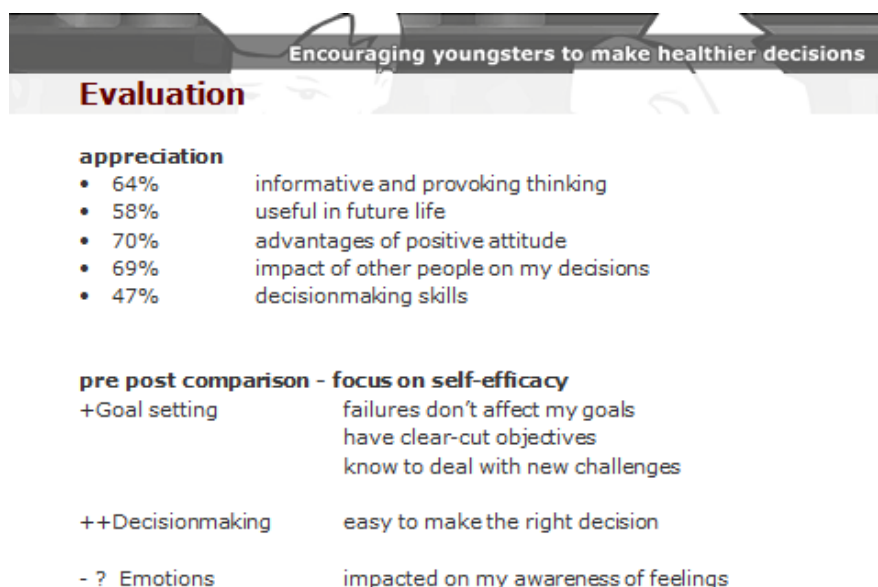
Boys and Girls Plus is supported by the European Union's Civil Justice programme (2007-2013), the European fund to strengthen Freedom, Security and Justice. <http://ec.europa.eu/justice/>
The views expressed in this report are purely the authors' own and do not reflect the views of the European Commission



Highlights from the roundtable

Peer van der Kreeft

- Traditional prevention programmes need to be complemented with more creative approaches such as the one we have tested with the Boys and Girls Plus project.
- In Europe we should work more on prevention and invest more in programmes following the US example. We need more means for randomized prevention programmes and for gender customised approaches
- Through the Boys and Girls project the partnership carried out:
 - Mapping social media based projects in 9 countries
 - Development and field trial of educational tools
 - The field trial of tools concerned expert opinion, training process and satisfaction, applicability and pre-post comparison
- Due to limited resources with the Boys and Girls Plus programme we did not carried out randomized control trials but process control which is also good and relevant
- The Boys and Girls Plus evaluation involved
 - 19 experts on education-prevention
 - 75 training of trainers workshops participants and 58 training questionnaires
 - 1.309 eligible respondents for pre-post comparison
- Main results about the programme:
 - Flexible to use in different settings
 - Practical approach
 - Welcome in South and East Europe
- Main feedback from pupils





Jacqueline Harding

- Children of our age do not think like us. They are "digital children" so they do not communicate the way we do and we must respect this. We need a new vision and the more creative we go the greater results we would have to engage children.
- Think Jazz. Think moving within boundaries of a set structure that provides safety and security but within which organic thinking can occur. Think improvisation. Agile and innovative thinking – producing fresh strategies.
- The creative thinking is peculiar of the digital era we live in and we need to correctly grow our children to be sure that one day they would think out of the box to solve those problems that we are creating today.

PREPARE FOR *THEIR* FUTURE NOT OUR PAST



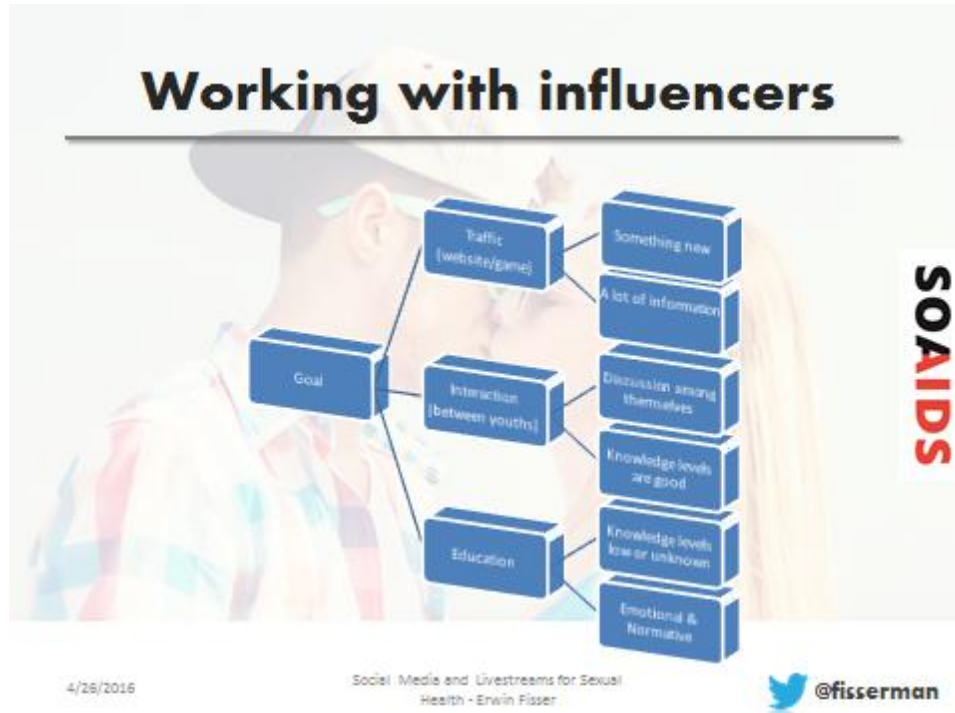
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- Enhancing creative thinking - fluidity of thinking and flexibility of thought through all media applications - will produce citizens of the future that can think in ways hitherto unknown. That's exciting.
- We need to start to ask big brave and bold questions about *Why media might be so important to all our futures?* It's a new paradigm – a new way of communicating
- So where is the evidence? The content with the highest degree of propensity for creative thought achieves the highest rate of influence in terms of engagement and involvement
- This is useful when working in prevention programmes
- One of the most dominant forms of inculcation of ways of thinking – is the media! The images and the moving image dominate and fascinates our biological system. Images have a way of making a deep impression on us. So we must use this medium if we want children to think differently.



Erwin Fisser

- When we work on prevention programmes we look at our goal through the medium of three parameters: traffic, interaction and education



- Influencers are key in our campaigns
- Traffic: online influencers create unique content for our campaign website, announce it (tease it) among their fans/ followers:
 - Be strict on what they say, loose on how they say it.
 - Decide on the subject together with the influencer; it has to be real and personal
 - Create a relevant surrounding on your site for the videos
- Interaction:
 - Interaction does not take place on our campaign website
 - Work with influencers and cocreate a message with which they approach their fans.
 - Think carefully about what the subject of the conversation should be
- Education: influencers as sex educators
- Conclusion: When to use what approach?
 - Depending on your goals (and budget)
 - Use a combination
 - Don't be afraid to try something new



Maga Aceves

- New strategies to prevent childhood overweight and obesity should include:
 - Social marketing
 - Youth involvement
 - Peer-Led approach
 - Social media
- Prevention campaign tested in the framework of the EYTO project:
 - Placed young people at the centre of the project
 - Were designed by young people for young people
 - Combined online and face to face interactions
- From “Som la Pera” campaign:
 - 38.5% of the intervention group consumed a >1 fruit per day compared to 26.6% of the control group
 - 35% of the intervention group reported to do at least 1 hour per day of physical activity compared to 18.6% of the control group

Conclusion

- Adolescence is a window of opportunity and an ideal life period for performing interventions of lifestyles improvement.
- Youth can be involve in the solutions for public health problems that affect them.
- All the efforts performed do not only shape lifestyles, but also create the sense of responsibility for young people to live these lifestyles.



Other inputs from participants

- Boys and Girls Plus designed a prevention programmes that address multi risk behaviours
- Public health promotion programmes should be designed by looking at methodologies and techniques widely used in industry and make the most of creativity and new media
- Need of programmes dealing with pre-conditions that encourage addition to better work on prevention
- What could the EU Parliament do?
 - Facilitate networking of specific expertise and know how
 - Create more understanding of this issue and increase its policy relevance
 - Allocate more resources for the design and trial of new methodologies and new prevention programmes

Photos





Video Statements

Please click on the links below to view the video statements from Bart Staes MEP, and Jacqueline Harding (Tomorrows Child).

“...exchange of information and practice [...] on how to speak in modern times with young people is really needed ”



Bart Staes, MEP

[Watch video](#)

“It is essential that we begin to think differently about the way we engage children and young people”



Jacqueline Harding, Director Tomorrows Child

[Watch video](#)



“Moving images dominate and fascinates our biological system. Images have a way of making a deep impression on us. So we must use this medium in prevention programmes if we want children and young people to think differently.”



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