

Piloting period:

April-July 2012

Setting:

- In Romania, the intervention took place in a rural location – Manastirea commune, Calarasi county – adolescents being selected among the students of “Matei Basarab” secondary school, which functions beside the high school with the same name.

- At first, meetings were held in the school festivities’ room, because part of the sessions took place during the school year and adolescents needed to be close to their classrooms and connect this extra activity with their school program, while the last sessions were held in the Local Day Center – the place where local children & adolescents unfold different spare-time activities (reading & drawing activities, environment related projects etc).

Description of intervention:

- In Romania, the intervention took place in 3 groups of teenagers (25 adolescents, most of them aged 14 or 15, mean age 14.95). They were instructed as to the effects of smoking as well as about peer pressure and responses to peer pressure. The sessions were organized weekly in two locations (“Matei Basarab” festivities’ room; Local Day Center - Minastirea commune) and durations varied between 1h and a half and 2 hours.

- The parents were divided into 3 groups with a total of 18 persons (mostly women aged 25 to 51, mean age 38.87). They participated in activities about smoking habits and teenage behavior. The sessions for parents were held in the same location as the ones for adolescents, at a different time of the day or different day of the week. Except the first session, which lasted approximately 2 hours, the duration of parents’ sessions did not exceed 1 hour and 40 minutes.

Main Obstacles:

- Recruiting groups of adolescents, whose parents are willing to also be involved and take part in the sessions; the solution in Romania's case – involvement of adolescents and parents who took part in the needs assessment activities of the project (focus groups)
- Match the schedule of the parts involved, together with the appropriate room availability (i.e. facilitator-adolescents, especially if adolescents are not members of the same class in school and have different timetables; facilitator- parents, schedule even more difficult to match, because each of the parents has a different timetable and responsibilities. In Romania, the classmates were selected from the same group, and parents were mostly women, some of them housekeepers, which was not intended, but a real luck).

Suggestions for improvement:

- Sessions should be better balanced in terms of time and content – sometimes it felt as not being equally dense, because some activities needed more time than expected, while others less time than expected
- In terms of participants selection, organizers should take care with group dynamics – some members of the groups were extrovert, some introvert, but the idea is to keep a certain involvement and pace
- Maybe it is not to be neglected an equilibrium between genders – things went on really well in Romania, but in the adolescents' groups there were predominantly boys, while in parents groups there were predominantly women, which might influence the intervention results
- Size of the group – is also an important issue: if working in parallel with bigger and smaller groups – the same activities will take more or less time to be finalized
- Means of tracking what happens at home should also be envisaged, because, in Romania's case, it was difficult to measure the effect of the home activities for parents. In this sense, it was felt that there was need for some joint activities (parents-adolescents), as to talk to one part involved and the other and extract conclusions for next activities.

Lessons learned:

In terms of sessions / participants involvement:

- Difficult to start, but hard to stop
- Important to prompt
- Mediate a warm talk / inflate a latent, more laconic expression

In terms of smoking cessation:

- Offer strong arguments
- Cultivate reasons/reasoning
- Teach how to treat
- Do not ignore will