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Conference theme: **2- Development of curriculum and course contents in social work.**

TITLE: SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN RESIDENTIAL AND FOSTER CARE, SUPPORTING HEALTHY SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT.

Introduction

In The Netherlands, Denmark and Scotland special awareness on the subject of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation was raised by national investigations on the prevalence and content of sexual abuse in residential and foster care. In Flanders (Belgium) it was the start of the so called Helpline 1712 (in 2012) to report on sexual and physical violence, that raised awareness on the subject.

The investigations showed that professionals perceive very few of the cases of sexual abuse in residential and foster care and in many cases the perpetrators turn out to be peers. Presumed causes are the incapability of professionals to support a healthy sexual development and discuss sexual behaviour with children and young people, their (foster) parents and other professionals. Sex is a subject that is not easily talked about and most professionals feel insecure about. Moreover, professionals have difficulties with recognizing unacceptable sexual behaviour, setting limits and making them subject of discussion and intervening effectively.

In this project four Universities and four work field partners in the four participating countries work together in an Erasmus+ project to develop education and training for (future) professionals to help them to build competences on guiding young people's healthy sexual development. Furthermore there is a strong focus on developing competencies to interact with children and young people, their (foster) parents, colleagues and other professionals on the topic of sexual behaviour, intimacy and inter-personal relationships in order to prevent sexual abuse of children and young people in care.

Three central outputs are being developed by the lecturers, work field partners and researchers involved in the next two years:

- an international pilot summer course for students who are attending educational programmes in the 4 university colleges,
- an international online course for professionals
- and a closing conference in the last year of the project where the final results, obtained goals and the future plans for the project will be presented.

The education and training modules developed are based on international research conducted by the countries participating the project:

- a review of publicly available materials (e.g. training programs, guidelines and tools) in the project countries,
- expert interviews in the participating countries
- focus groups with professionals working in residential care or with foster parents in the practice partners in the project.

All university colleges involved have committed to implement certain parts of the outputs in their own curriculum and local programs.

In this workshop we'd like to invite professionals and fellow lecturers to take part in an international reference group to exchange ideas with us and provide us with feedback on what we have developed on the outputs of the online course and summer school so far (materials, the online course, a framework...). By making use of dilemmas, cases, materials and role play we want to involve professionals and lecturers in exploring and talking about what is important in promoting sexually healthy behaviour in children and youngsters and what the important thresholds are that we have to take into account. Furthermore we would like to challenge the existing ideas of the lecturers and professionals concerning the sexually healthy behaviour and elicit reflection and awareness on the topic. The feedback we receive during this workshop can then be used to fine-tune our outcomes.

Besides the active collaboration we want to extend the knowledge and international collaboration by disseminating with lecturers, researchers and work field partners in Europe in general – with the possibility of involving lecturers and professionals in our closing conference next year.