

Prevention through Culture



Financováno
Evropskou unií

We are implementing the incubation phase of the Prevention through Culture project 2024 - 2025 under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The project is under the patronage of the Government Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs. Klára Laurenčíková.

The project is based on an international cooperation with the Danish National Centre for Art and Mental Health, where art activities are proven to be functional and effective in promoting the building of psychological resilience, prevention of mental illness, a tool for developing socialization and learning prerequisites.

The aim of the project is to transfer this good practice to the Czech environment and modify it to fit the specifics of the Czech environment. Prevention through Culture is an activity aimed at creating an effective and safe tool for prevention and education in the field of mental health, mental literacy and socio-emotional learning through the implementation of creative play under the guidance of trained artists.

What problem does the project address?

The project responds to the problem of the high number of children suffering from mental health problems that affect their health.

Research carried out both at international level (e.g. OECD Health at a Glance: Europe 2022, THE STATE OF THE WORLD 'S CHILDREN 2021 Promoting, protecting and caring for children's mental health UNICEF (1), data collection carried out by WHO and EC) and at national level (e.g. area studies of the National Institute of Mental Health 2020 (2) and 2023 (3) and the HBSC research institute, Centre for Social Services Prague - Mental Health of Pupils, 2022 (4)) have clearly and accurately shown a significant increase in mental health problems of children and adolescents in recent years.

Our pre-research of the above sources and information from other organisations working with children and young people (e.g. Nevypust' duši, SOFA, Association of School Psychologists, Prague Social Services Centre, Fridays for Future) clearly highlighted the following fundamental problems that deserve urgent solutions:

- **An order of magnitude increase in feelings of long-term sadness, anxiety, depression, self-harm and completed suicide among children, adolescents, young adults during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.**
- **Lack of widespread mental health prevention and inadequate professional capacity in psychological and psychiatric care.**

Based on the pre-research conducted, we identified the absence of an effective holistic tool that can be used to prevent mental illness to a high degree.

What are the causes of the problem?

The problem of increasing incidence of mental disorders and illnesses is mainly due to the following aspects:

- **The COVID-19 pandemic** during which children and youth were without socialization and often exposed to difficult family relationships.
- **The phenomenon of the digital/online environment** and the associated use of social networking sites has led to lower levels of socialisation, an increase in mental disorders and addictions among children and young people.
- **Environmental/Climate Grief** - a phenomenon of high levels of anxiety among the young generation resulting from fears about the worsening ecological situation on the planet.
- **The current geopolitical situation** - the war in Ukraine, according to experts, is another factor contributing to mental discomfort, anxiety and depression among children and youth.
- **The increase in socio-economic difficulties of families** - inflation, rising energy and food prices, etc. and the resulting stress and deteriorated relationships within families contribute to the mental well-being of children and adolescents.

Failure to address the impact of these aspects manifests itself as **environmental pressures on children and adolescents** that are not appropriate to their age and mental abilities, resulting in stress, anxiety, reduced motivation and depression, which generates the second of the identified problems to be addressed:

The absence of widespread prevention in the field of mental health and the lack of professional capacity in psychological-psychiatric care. The absence of preventive self-help programmes that focus on acquiring the competence to self-regulate emotions at a psychophysical level (most prevention takes the form of frontal lectures or interactive activities focused on the intellect), thereby developing children's emotional literacy holistically.

What is the aim of the project?

The aim of the Prevention through Culture project is to **create a preventive innovative tool to support the prevention of mental illness in children**, which focuses on acquiring the **competence to self-regulate emotions at a psychophysical level and thus develop children's mental health literacy holistically**.

The sub-objectives of the project are to transfer good foreign practice to the Czech Republic, to modify it to the Czech environment and to verify the functionality of this tool (the Prevention through Culture programme). This is a researched and scientifically proven area of prevention, which is implemented at national level in many EU countries.

Our hypothesis, supported by research studies, is that the creation of the Prevention by Culture programme in the Czech Republic and its implementation has a significant potential to contribute to the prevention of mental health in children and adolescents and thus reduce the development of mental illness in this target group. **This correlates significantly with potential personnel and financial savings in subsequent highly specialized care - social, psychiatric, psychological, medical.**

The project is **pilot the implementation of the Prevention through Culture** in Schools programme. Ongoing validation of functionality and effects will evaluate whether the Culture Prevention **programme has the potential to complement the already implemented activities in the field of mental health prevention for children and adolescents in the Czech Republic with a new method based on artistic activities or Creative playing**.

The evaluation survey is conducted in close cooperation with the National Institute of Mental Health of the Czech Republic. We want to provide data and outputs from the project that will further serve for advocacy activities.

What is Creative playing?

Creative playing is an approach to developing socio-emotional skills that each child involved freely discovers based on their own inner capacities, individual experience and pace.

Cultural prevention works with the child's expressivity and relating to the world in the here and now, according to his or her momentary experience.

Expression through Creative playing gives the child the space to express himself and thus come to terms with current emotions and see reactions to them. This leads to the regulation of psychophysical stress and learning to express one's own emotions, which thus cease to be unconscious and repressed.

[1] [SOWC-2021-EUROPE-REGIONAL-BRIEF.PDF \(UNICEF.ORG\)](#)

[2] [INCREASE IN PREVALENCE OF CURRENT MENTAL DISORDERS IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19: ANALYSIS OF REPEATED NATIONWIDE CROSS-SECTIONAL SURVEYS | EPIDEMIOLOGY AND PSYCHIATRIC SCIENCES | CAMBRIDGE CORE](#)

[3] [NÁRODNÍ MONITORING DUŠEVNÍHO ZDRAVÍ DĚTÍ: 40 % VYKAZUJE ZNÁMKY STŘEDNÍ AŽ TĚŽKÉ DEPRESE, 30 % ÚZKOSTI. ODBORNÍCI PŘIPRAVUJÍ PREVENTIVNÍ OPATŘENÍ – NÁRODNÍ ÚSTAV DUŠEVNÍHO ZDRAVÍ \(NUDZ.CZ\)](#)

[4] [KOMPARACE DAT PRAHA DUSEVNI ZDRAVI ZAKU.PDF \(PREVENCE-PRAHA.CZ\)](#)



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