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| **Necessity for innovative forms of interactive education for teenagers to promote mental health and develop social skills** |
| **Setting/problem**The dynamics and development of society set new challenges and requirements. Many are unprepared due to lack of psychological preparation, necessary for complete life and well-being. Health and educational institutions have to monitor changes and needs that matter for health promotion and to react properly. Analysis shows that in Bulgaria they respond relatively slow to the pressing needs of people. Teenagers witness contradictory life models and behaviours which puts them in situations of hard, often wrong, harmful or dangerous choices. The main problematic areas are: insufficient health culture and education and with regard to psychoactive substances and sexual development; difficulties in communication, aggression, self-isolation. This reality enforces new educational forms to be introduced for risk prevention and health promotion.**Intervention**On the Bulgarian Ministry of Education initiative we developed an innovative form of interactive trainings *Mental Health and Social Skills*, designed for teenagers 14-19, their parents and teachers. It was realised for 1 school year with 120 participants from the 3 groups. The goals were: self-awareness, development of individual potential, building of communication skills. The format included: participation through personal experience; role plays, dramatisation, talks and free discussions on topics, chosen by participants.**Outcomes**This innovative form of training enabled participants to discuss important and pressing issues freely. They opened to each other, were emotional and succeeded to find out some of their hidden resources and qualities. These helped teenagers, parents and teachers to hear each other, to understand others’ position and to try to find acceptable decisions for tough situations. The training gave useful information in accessible way to get over the deficits in knowledge and skills and to make teenagers capable of identifying risks and dangerous behaviours.**Implications**92% of the participants said the interactive training was useful and effective and it has definite practical orientation and applicability. 86% confirmed that they expanded their knowledge and understanding about the discussed issues. It was underlined the necessity this initiative to be continued as a policy to provide grounds for work with real needs and problems of teenagers.**Preferred presentation format**Poster presentation |