

# EU E OS OUTROS PROJECT

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## **Abstract**

In the scope of the protocol between IDT (Drugs and Drug Addiction Institute) and CIID (Identity and Diversity Research Centre), we are developing a design of a research-action project. The aim is to evaluate the test implementation of the “Eu e os Outros”<sup>1</sup> Project. This design and some results is what we intend to present and discuss. It is important to stress that the test phase will be carried through the national level, however, we propose ourselves to present the drawing in Leiria – scope of intervention of the CRI Leiria – IDT (Centre of Integrated Answers) and IPL-CIID (Polytechnic Institute of Leiria).

This national Project, created by the central services of IDT, the Project known as “Eu e os Outros” appears associated to the youth website [www.tu-alinhas.pt](http://www.tu-alinhas.pt) as a setting that creates sensitivity and reflection connected to the thematic of drugs and other areas related to the growth. The main goals are: to promote health education; to strengthen the preventive approach; to implement this, with continuity, through teachers as educative and socializing agents; to stimulate students to critical debate, shared construction of knowledge and attitudes.

## **Key words**

Youth; Internet; Health Education; Drug Abuse Prevention.

## **Health Promotion and Prevention**

The health education will only be able to get significant results if it is integrated in the school daily life and if it is no longer an activity of certain teachers and some external organizations: therefore, the schools need to open themselves to the exte-

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1. “Eu e os Outros” means me and the others, referring to the complex relationships among the teenagers in their growing process.

rior... (Sampaio in DGIDC, 2007: 10). Being the school a privileged setting in the preventive approach with its educative and informative role, stimulating the reflection and enabling the young ones to a decision making that leads to conscientious promotional choices in terms of well-being, this represents a dynamic and interactive way to meet the education and health aims in a perspective of global promotion of transversal skills of citizenship.

In this context we understand prevention as a technical-scientific level of intervention and, in a general sense, can be understood as an active process of initiative implementation intending to modify and to improve the full training and the quality of life of the individuals, being the personal and social abilities fomented, oriented to the well-being of the populations (Marques in DGIDC, 2007: 80).

This preventive intervention can be implemented in three levels of strategies: universal, selective and indicated, that is, directed to the set of students, to specific groups of students (classes/groups identified with some psycho-social vulnerabilities) or to some sub-groups already presenting risk consumptions and/or behaviours, that will imply different approaches (Borges & Filho, 2004). In the “Eu e os Outros” Project the preventive intervention is of universal scope, directed to a set of students, without taking in account the level of individual risk.

This is about training personal and social skills, it's based in an interactive game which it's based in eight different narratives – online – and implies the exploration in groups oriented by a technical team composed by teachers. The teacher, applicator, must be willing to live the challenges that are proposed to and to reflect according to his/her personal experiences (Melo, 2006). This preventive intervention in school will have to be based in a comprehensive approach, in a teacher-student relationship structured, in the reciprocal trust (Sampaio in DGIDC, 2007: 11). It still has go through the improvement of health, well-being and existing conditions of the individuals, which in specific terms, consists in the improvement of the knowledge and competence levels, in the promotion of the individual responsibility and in the development of social and communitarian bows (Morel *et al.*, 2001). Therefore, the “individual life skills”, in accordance to the World Health Organization (Fernández *et al.*, 2006: 7), are the abilities to adopt a flexible and positive behaviour that allows them to effectively approach the requirements and challenges of daily life. It is the personal, interpersonal, cognitive and psychological skills that allow people to control and to direct their lives, developing the capacity to live with their environment and to get changes in it. As examples of these abilities we have decision making, critical thinking, self knowledge, commu-

nication skills, interpersonal relations, capacity to face emotions and stress control.

We can't possibly learn these skills in abstract, only through practice. That's why its learning is known as a training whose conditions are: application of significant settings – the school, in this particular case – and the use of interactive methods.

The “Eu e os Outros” Project is based in the communication globalization processes of nowadays “network societies” (Castells, 2002), highlighting the fact that the Internet is a precious instrument in the processes of education, teaching and learning where the youngsters are active elements of their training (Cardoso *et al.*, 2005). In this perspective, we are in a new communicational setting based in shared communication codes, which go beyond the technological skills and lead to new forms of appropriation and integration in the daily practice (Castells, 2002; 2004). Thus youngsters develop in a reflexive, active and critical perspective, their skills of civic participation since the methodology of action-reflection, associated to the game, highlights and stimulate the critical debate, the shared construction of knowledge and attitudes. This also values the fact that all of them having capacities and abilities for the problems resolution.

### The Game Approach

In the “Eu e os Outros”, the use of the game as a preventive instrument is organized in an intervention program with timing and sequential structure more or less defined. This supposes the gradual conquest of a set of contents or abilities, or the constancy of the work developed in a defined way. In this case, the intervention consistency is obtained through small stories that establish bridges between each session, as chapters of a book. The game implies discovery, living the stories, a dynamic process and an increased form to gain security and autonomy (Arez & Neto, 2000).

The game approach – game of exercise, symbolic and rules – and its playful component has an extreme importance in the psychological development and as a preventive strategy. These playful constructions involve the understanding of the values, attitudes and representations in association with the actions done, the action settings and the time management related to daily life routines of formal nature (school time) and informal (spontaneous or institutionalized free time). Although sometimes the game is centred in the citizen, the development unit must be of relationship nature (Arez & Neto, 2000).

The Project is based on the principles of the interactive narrative, assuming that the best way to know the relation of the young with any thematic is through its own words, analyzing its own narratives about the diverse phenomenon in chat environment, both formal and informal one. So, the space for the integrated risk experience, the exploration, the confrontation with the unexpected guarantee, at the same time, a space of relationship and meeting with the other (Melo, 2006). By this a reflection is promoted about its meaning attribution and the implied transaction personal processes in its construction.

The reflection process is the moment where each one selects what of more significant occurred during the action, decides if he/she wants to share it with the others and where it's analysed the correct way of making it, collating itself with the others' reactions. To do so, each one elaborates what initially was no more than a provoked experience and attributes meaning to it according to the one's previous experiences. This existential learning follows some phases: experience of the game (how it was); talking about feelings, emotions or reactions (how did you feel? what did you like most?); performance evaluation (were you satisfied with the game result? was it what you were waiting for?); thematic contents exploration (what do you find that was more important in this game? what is this game all about?); and changing perspective (if you played it again, which changes would you make?) (Gramigna, 1994).

## The Project

The “Eu e os Outros” is a health promotion Project, which stresses the drug abuse prevention, directed to the 11 to 15 year old students (3rd CEB).

The implementation of this Project implies the accomplishment of seven sessions for each story/subject – there are eight stories, with eight subjects and eight characters. Each story has a central character as a subject, there are some dimensions crossing each subject with different perspectives of several questions. The psychoactive substances are present in different stories giving notion of the diversity of effects, settings, standards of consumption, etc. These stories will allow the student to place himself in the position of the other, identifying himself with some thematic and finding some tracks to face situations-problems. By this the youngsters will be able to reflect on the questions raised in each story and, as the story goes, they have to make decisions that will direct the story progress in different ways.

The challenges and dramas of the eight stories have its situations settings related to the following subjects: Growing up; Friends; Family; Love and Passion; School; Amusement; and in the Future...; When Justice is not Blind... And they have as engine the eight characters – Jamal, Catarina, Emanuel, João, Alice, Sabrina, Daniel and Maria – created by the youngsters in graphical terms, personality, social context, social representation of youthful cultures or urban tribes – surfer, gothic, nerd, dread, fashion, *beta* (“daddy’s girl”), foreigner, freak... ([www.tu-alinhas.pt](http://www.tu-alinhas.pt)). The result is an approach of the thematic of drugs demanding a reflection and decision making through the diverse challenges that come across.

The implementation has the following methodology: five groups of five schools of the 3<sup>rd</sup> CEB (students between 11 and 15 years, approximately); two applicators (one assuming himself as “the game master”), one of them is a teacher of the group in the non disciplinary curricular area of Civic Training, Project Area or Accompanied Study; a rotating power by “a decision chair” in which each one of the students has to pass trying different roles; argumentation and anticipation of the consequences for the group in the decision making; providing complementary answers for the group dynamic (to consolidate the reflection concerning the questions arising).

The joint work between CIID and IDT is based in the Technical Group of Support (GTS) whose role is planning, follow up and evaluate all the process. In planning terms, this Group mobilizes and dynamics the Project implementation in Leiria (including the training to the applicators). The GTS is the link between teams of the central services and the applicators and guarantees the link with the local structures harnessing the existing resources. The follow up is in accordance to the group of applicators needs (planning and structuring the application sessions according to the work aims defined for each group; orientation of the applicators in the resolution of situation-problem that takes into account the group management and dynamic). The evaluation is assumed as an application of the established evaluation protocol that is related to the data evaluation collection, treatment and the consequent information of the Project execution.

At this moment the Project is in the planning phase, and we have proceeded to the schools selection and it’s being held the preparation of the applicators training.

## Conclusion

In synthesis it is important to strengthen the idea that the use/abuse problematic of psychoactive substances appears inside a generic approach to general questions of adolescence. In this sense, there is a concern to guarantee a significant and transversal approach for the student, independently of their age, gender, youthful culture, school level, socio-demographic and cultural characteristics.

These aspects are related to other training and education territories, which require the development of civic abilities in a global context. The citizenship skills, or civic, are the individual capacities to know, to make and to have an attitude in a defined acting environment in the political, social, economic, cultural levels (Selewyn, 2004). In this context, the Society of Information, based on the knowledge, supposes the active participation of population that implies the development of new pedagogical approaches oriented to the individual continuous development. The “Eu e os Outros” Project assumes itself as a contribution in this domain.

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