

## **Youth mental health interventions in Portugal**

A technical report by Catarina Canário and Orlanda Cruz

Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences of the University of Porto

Center for Psychology at University of Porto

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this technical report is to present a baseline survey regarding youth mental health interventions in Portugal. The survey's objective was to identify and characterize existing intervention programmes with children and adolescents up to 18 years of age. The review focused on intervention programmes (universal, selective or indicated) to promote children's and adolescents' mental health or psychological well-being. Evidence was examined regarding every intervention programme (designed, delivered or evaluated), locally developed or translated/translated and adapted from an international intervention, in school, community and/or family settings. The search strategy included different databases such as scientific, academic, and professional, among others. After initial screening, a total of 21 intervention programmes were identified. Most of them were universal interventions ( $n = 15$ , 71.43%), school-based ( $n = 17$ , 80.95%), locally developed ( $n = 14$ , 66.67%) and at evaluation stage ( $n = 16$ , 76.19%). Findings suggest that existing interventions are poorly disseminated. Excepting translated/translated and adapted interventions, locally developed interventions have only been implemented by their own authors, even though the intervention manuals exist. With this review, we expect to disseminate information on the existing interventions in Portugal aiming at promoting mental health in children and adolescents.

Keywords: mental health promotion; psychological well-being; intervention; programme; children and adolescents; Portugal; survey

## Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Method</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Results</b> .....	<b>6</b>
1. Universal interventions evaluated.....	9
2. Universal interventions delivered .....	22
3. Universal interventions designed.....	24
4. Selective interventions evaluated.....	25
5. Selective interventions delivered .....	29
6. Indicated interventions delivered.....	31
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>34</b>

## List of tables

1. Universal interventions' summary characterization ..... 7
2. Selective and indicated interventions' summary characterization..... 8

## **Introduction**

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2001, p.1), mental health is “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”. Additionally, it can be described as a positive sense of well-being, and having resources such as self-esteem, optimism, satisfying personal relationships and the ability to cope with adversities (Kovess-Masfety, Murray, & Gureje, 2005).

Mental health can be described in two dimensions: positive mental health, which considers mental health as a resource; and mental ill-health, which regards mental disorders, symptoms and problems (Lehtinen, Ozamiz, Underwood, & Weiss, 2005). Research has given particular attention to the characterization of children’s and adolescents’ mental ill-health. In 2001, about 20% of children and adolescent worldwide suffered from mental health problems (WHO, 2001). In recent decades, mental health problems have become more frequent in children and adolescents (Stengård & Appelqvist-Schmidlechner, 2010). A growing number of emotional problems, conduct problems and learning disabilities have been identified in children and adolescents, and have been found to significantly affect their health and overall functioning (Goodwin et al., 2009).

Mental health problems affect children and adolescents on an individual level, deteriorating their intellectual and emotional development, and on a social level, deteriorating their relationships with friends and family (Stengård & Appelqvist-Schmidlechner, 2010). Evidence has been reported regarding the detrimental effect of mental health problems in children’s and adolescents’ school outcomes, contributing to lower school achievement (Metsäpelto, Pakarinen, Kiuru, Poikkeus, Lerkkanen, &

Nurmi, 2015) and student absenteeism (Askeland, Haugland, Stormark, Bøe, & Hysing, 2015). Moreover, research has documented significant links between mental health problems in childhood, in adolescence and in adulthood (Ravens-Sieberer et al., 2015).

For these reasons, mental health promotion activities with children and adolescent should be developed and implemented. In fact, the WHO (2005) declared that young mental health is an area to which professionals and policy-makers must direct their attention. Mental health promotion focuses on improving individual's well-being, building competences, resources and strengths, and ultimately prevent mental health problems, reducing its incidence, prevalence, and severity (Barry, 2001).

Activities to promote mental health have a significant positive impact not only at an individual level, improving mental and physical health, but also at community and societal levels, improving one's productivity at work, home and school, contributing to less violence and crime, and also improving quality of life and life expectancy (Walker, Verins, Moodie, & Webster, 2005).

Within the scope of mental health promotion, programmes can be characterized as those developed within the framework of prevention services, in one of three categories: universal, selective and indicated. Universal intervention programmes are available to all individuals in the general population, selective intervention programmes are available to specific individuals who may be at risk of having future difficulties, and finally, indicated intervention programmes are available to individuals screened and pointed out as being at risk for a specific emotional and/or behavioural problem (Asmussen, 2011).

In Portugal, even though data are available regarding the prevalence and incidence of mental health disorders in adults (Direção Geral da Saúde, 2016), no data are available for children and adolescents. Furthermore, unlike other countries where

systematic and/or literature reviews exist to identify programmes that aim to enhance the social and emotional skills development of children and young people, revealing the evidence on its effectiveness (e.g., Clarke, Morreale, Field, Hussein, & Barry, 2015), in Portugal no reviews are available on the existing interventions aimed at promoting children's and adolescents' mental health.

Thus, it was our purpose to perform a baseline survey regarding youth mental health interventions in Portugal. Our objectives were: 1) to identify and characterize the existing intervention programmes with children and adolescents up to 18 years of age, either locally developed or translated/translated and adapted from empirically validated international interventions, and 2) to identify its implementation stage, within three possible stages: designed but never delivered; delivered, when intervention was or is being implemented, but no outcomes are available; and evaluated, when the intervention was implemented and the outcomes are available.

## **Method**

The review focused on intervention programmes (universal, selective or indicated) existing in Portugal that aim at promoting child and adolescents' mental health in school, community or family settings. Evidence was examined regarding every intervention programme (designed, delivered or evaluated), locally developed or translated/translated and adapted from an international intervention, targeting children's and adolescents' mental health promotion.

Interventions eligible for inclusion included universal interventions designed to promote well-being and mental health and selective or indicated interventions designed to prevent mental disorders, risk behaviours, and/or lack of adjustment. Parental training interventions were not eligible for inclusion in this review. Thus, inclusion criteria were the following: 1) interventions targeting children's and adolescents' mental health promotion; 2) interventions involving children's and adolescents' mental health in the general population (universal interventions); 3) interventions involving children and adolescents who may be or are at-risk of developing mental disorders, risk behaviours, and/or lack of adjustment (selective and indicated interventions); and 4) youth mental health interventions designed to be delivered in school, family and/or community contexts.

The search strategy included different databases, namely: 1) scientific databases (Scielo and EBSCO, specifically in the databases Academic Search Complete and PsycInfo, PsycArticles, and Psychology and Behavioral Science Collection), 2) academic Portuguese databases (namely in universities' datasets and the Repositório Científico de Acesso Aberto de Portugal), 3) professional datasets (Ordem dos Psicólogos Portugueses), and 4) the web search engine Google (Portugal). The English search terms used were “mental health” or “psychological”, “intervention” or

“programme”, “children” and/or “adolescents”, and “Portuguese” or “Portugal”. The Portuguese search terms used were “intervenção” ou “programa”, “saúde mental” or “psicológica”, “crianças” and/or “adolescentes”, and “Português” or “Portugal”

The review was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved the identification of relevant interventions whereas the second stage involved their analysis and characterization. During the first stage of the review we experienced difficulties accessing the grey literature. In the second stage of the review, telephonic contact was established with five authors (23.81%) to gather information to improve characterization.

## Results

After initial screening, a total of 21 intervention programmes were identified. Of those, 15 (71.43%) were universal interventions, 5 (23.81%) were selective interventions, and one (4.76%) was an indicated intervention. Regarding its source, 14 (66.67%) are locally developed interventions, whereas 7 (33.33%) are translated/translated and adapted from international evidence-based interventions. Interventions target children and adolescents from 3 to 20 years old, and their duration range between 3 and 27 months. The majority of the interventions are delivered in school context ( $n = 17$ , 80.95%), by teachers ( $n = 13$ , 61.90%) and psychologists ( $n = 4$ , 19.05%), two (9.52%) interventions are delivered in community context, one (4.76%) intervention is delivered in school and community contexts by psychologists, and one (4.76%) intervention is delivered in family, school and community contexts by psychologists. Most of the interventions described have been delivered and evaluated ( $n = 16$ , 76.19%), three (14.29%) have been delivered but the outcomes of the evaluation are not available, and two (9.52%) interventions are currently being implemented.

Information on the survey outcomes is summarized in Tables 1 and 2, and detailed in sections 1 to 5 according to the intervention type (universal, selective or indicated) and at what stage the intervention is currently (designed, delivered or evaluated). Detailed information regards the interventions' name, authors, affiliation when applicable, type and stage, and a brief description on how was designed, how is being implemented, and of its evaluation methodology and outcomes. Information on how the intervention is being implemented is only available for those that have been delivered and/or evaluated, and information on evaluation methodology and outcomes is only available for those that have been evaluated.

**Table 1 – Universal interventions’ summary characterization**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Stage</b>	<b>Target (age)</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Duration</b>
1.1. Programa Anos Incríveis para Educadores / Professores	Universal	Translated	Evaluated	Children (3 to 7 years old)	School (implemented by teachers)	6 months
1.2. E agora Ruca	Universal	Locally developed	Evaluated	Children (8 to 10 years old)	School (implemented by teachers)	9 months
1.3. Devagar se vai ao longe	Universal	Locally developed	Evaluated	Children (9 to 10 years old)	School (implemented by psychologists)	9 months
1.4. Oficina de treino de competências pessoais e sociais	Universal	Locally developed	Evaluated	Children (10 to 11 years old)	School (implemented by teachers)	9 months
1.5. Trilhos	Universal	Locally developed	Evaluated	Adolescents (12 to 15 years old)	School (implemented by teachers)	27 months (3 school years)
1.6. Programa 4d	Universal	Translated and adapted	Evaluated	Adolescents (12 to 15 years old)	School (implemented by teachers)	9 months
1.7. Promoção de experiências positivas em jovens	Universal	Locally developed	Evaluated	Children (until 10 years old) Adolescents (until 20 years old)	School, Community	9 months
1.8. Programa atitude positiva	Universal	Locally developed	Evaluated	Children (9 years old)	School (implemented by psychologists)	5 months
1.9. Programa Salto de Gigante	Universal	Locally developed	Evaluated	Children (from 3 to 6 years old)	School (implemented by psychologists)	9 months
1.10. MindUp	Universal	Translated and adapted	Evaluated	Children and adolescents (from 3 to 13 years old)	School (implemented by teachers)	9 months
1.11. RESCUR	Universal	Translated and adapted	Evaluated	Children and adolescents (from 4 to 12 years old)	School (implemented by teachers)	9 months
1.12. DreamTeens	Universal	Locally developed	Delivered	Adolescents (11 to 18 years old)	Community	Not applicable
1.13. Whyschool	Universal	Locally developed	Delivered	Children and adolescents	School (implemented by teachers)	9 months
1.14. Os amigos do Ziki	Universal	Translated and adapted	Currently being delivered	Children (5 to 7 years old)	School (implemented by teachers)	6 months
1.15. ES’COOL	Universal	Locally developed	Currently being delivered	Adolescents (12 to 15 years old)	School (implemented by teachers)	9 months

**Table 2 – Selective and indicated interventions’ summary characterization**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Type (specification)</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Stage</b>	<b>Target (age)</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Duration</b>
4.1. ECOS	Selective (Substance abuse and addiction)	Locally developed	Evaluated	Children, adolescents and their families	Community	24 months
4.2. Tu decides	Selective (Substance abuse and addiction)	Translated and adapted	Evaluated	Adolescents (13, 14, 16 and 17 years old)	School (implement by teachers)	9 months
4.3. Find your own style	Selective (Interpersonal violence prevention)	Locally developed	Evaluated	Adolescents (11 to 16 years old)	School (implement by teachers)	6 months
5.1. ManifestaSaude	Selective (Substance abuse)	Translated and adapted	Delivered	Adolescents (12 to 14 years old)	School (implemented by psychologists)	12 months
5.2. +Contigo	Selective (Suicide prevention)	Locally developed	Delivered	Adolescents (12 to 15 years old)	School (implemented by teachers)	6 months
6.1. Resiliência e NE’s	Indicated (Special needs)	Locally developed	Delivered	Adolescents	School, community and family	3 months

## **1. Universal interventions evaluated**

### **1.1. Programa Anos Incríveis para Educadores / Professores**

#### **1 Intervention details**

Authors of the Portuguese translation: Maria Filomena Fonseca Gaspar and Maria João Rama Seabra Santos (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Coimbra)

Type of Intervention: Universal

At what stage is the intervention currently: Evaluated

#### **2 Brief description of the intervention**

This intervention aims at developing positive skills of management of the group of children/classroom in educators/teachers, and also to promote social, emotional and academic skills in the children in a relationship of partnership with the families (Seabra-Santos et al., 2016). The intervention is aimed at educators and teachers of preschool and school children (from 3 to 8 years old).

#### **3 Brief description of how the intervention was designed**

The Incredible Years intervention is based on a theoretical background that includes the theories of social learning, attachment and self-efficacy (Seabra-Santos et al., 2016). In Portugal, the translation and implementation of the Incredible Years intervention (Webster-Stratton, 2001) began in 2003, and, since then, several actions have been developed. The programme comprises different interventions aimed at parents, children and educators and teachers, all of them targeting the children. Considering the purpose of this technical report, the authors choose to only characterize the intervention aimed at educators and teachers of preschool and school children. The Regional Directions of Education are responsible for authorising the intervention implementation in public schools.

#### **4 Brief description of how the intervention is being implemented**

The Portuguese translation of the intervention aimed at educators and teachers of preschool and school children is being implemented in pre-schools and schools since 2009/2010. Educators and teachers, 14 to 15, are enrolled in 6 workshops in a monthly frequency. Training is provided by accredited facilitators (Webster-Stratton & Bywater, 2015). Between the workshops, teachers are encouraged to develop the learned strategies with the children. When teachers implement the learned strategies with the children in their classroom they also present the strategies to the parents so that teachers and parents perform consistent strategies/behaviours (Seabra-Santos et al., 2016).

## **5 Brief description of the evaluation methodology and outcomes**

Throughout the evaluation process which takes place during implementation, training educators and teachers fill in reflexion questionnaires and do several readings to promote self-learning. Regarding the intervention outcomes, pre and post-intervention, and follow-up evaluation in a quasi-experimental design was carried out in Portugal (Seabra-Santos et al., 2016). Results revealed the effectiveness of this intervention corroborating previous international studies with this intervention programme. Specifically, educators and teachers reported an increase in their positive educative practices, and a decrease in their negative educative practices, and children in the intervention group revealed a decrease in externalizing behaviour and an increase in pro-social behaviour (Seabra-Santos et al., 2016). Additionally, children presented better social skills when both educators/teachers and parents were enrolled in the Incredible Years interventions (Seabra-Santos et al., 2016).

## **1.2. E agora Ruca?**

### **1 Intervention details**

Author: Nuno Marreiros

Type of Intervention: Universal

At what stage is the intervention currently: Evaluated

### **2 Brief description of the intervention**

This intervention is aimed at children between 8 and 10 years old. It includes a set of ludic and pedagogical activities that are implemented in classes by teachers with the purpose of promoting individual and social skills to stimulate a healthy lifestyle.

### **3 Brief description of how the intervention was designed**

The intervention was developed after a need assessment that pointed out lack of materials and interventions to promote a healthy lifestyle with children between 8 and 10 years old. The intervention was then developed based on the theoretical grounding of health promotion and locus of control, aiming at empowering children to improve their health, preventing risk behaviours (Marreiros, 2009a, 2009b). As the intervention takes place in school context, to implement the intervention an authorization is needed from the Regional Directions of Education. Teachers receive certified training and then implement the intervention with their class throughout the school year.

### **4 Brief description of how the intervention is being implemented**

The intervention has been implemented in primary schools of the southern region of Portugal (Algarve). After initial training, teachers received additional training and supervision at each trimester. The intervention is developed by teachers with their class during 60 to 90 minutes per week. Methodology includes a role playing game, and action reflection activities.

### **5 Brief description of the evaluation methodology and outcomes**

Throughout the evaluation process which takes place during implementation, participants and teachers' degree of satisfaction and participation has been evaluated using questionnaires. The effectiveness of this intervention has been evaluated in studies comprising control and experimental groups (quasi-experimental design), and also longitudinally, with children's follow up until 3 months after the intervention. Results revealed positive outcomes in children related with their locus of control, less emotional difficulties and more assertive behaviours (Marreiros, 2009b).

### **1.3. Devagar se vai ao longe**

#### **1 Intervention details**

Author: Raquel Raimundo

Type of Intervention: Universal

At what stage is the intervention currently: Evaluated

#### **2 Brief description of the intervention**

This intervention for the development of socio-emotional competences is developed in a school context. It is developed within classroom, implemented by psychologists in the presence of the teachers, and integrated in the class syllabus. Its purpose is to promote social emotional competences, psychological adjustment and academic achievement, and to prevent or reduce emotional and behavioural problems in children from 9 to 10 year olds.

#### **3 Brief description of how the intervention was designed**

The intervention was based on a needs assessment that identified the need to develop social and emotional skills in children of the fourth grade in order to promote an adequate adjustment to the fifth grade, which constitutes a significant transition in the Portuguese education system. The intervention was developed accordingly to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning orientations (CASEL, 2007, cit in Raimundo & Pinto, 2016).

#### **4 Brief description of how the intervention is being implemented**

The intervention has been developed in two groups of schools in Lisbon (Raimundo & Pinto, 2016). The intervention is developed over the school year. It has five units (self-awareness, social consciousness, self-control, interpersonal relationship, and decision making in social contexts), distributed by 21 sessions (45 to 60 minutes each), developed weekly.

#### **5 Brief description of the evaluation methodology and outcomes**

The evaluation of the intervention implementation includes children's behaviour and satisfaction and teacher's support (Raimundo & Pinto, 2016). The effectiveness of this intervention has been evaluated in studies comprising control and experimental groups, and also longitudinally, with children's follow up until 10 months after the intervention, in a quasi-experimental design. Results revealed an increase in children's socio emotional skills, fewer internalizing and externalizing behaviours and better academic achievement (Raimundo & Pinto, 2016).

## **1.4. Oficina de treino de competências pessoais e sociais**

### **1 Intervention details**

Authors: Fernanda Moedas and Ana Losada (Câmara Municipal de Matosinhos)

Type of Intervention: Universal

At what stage is the intervention currently: Evaluated

### **2 Brief description of the intervention**

The personal and social skills training workshop was developed to provide a good adjustment of students to the fifth grade, particularly developing communication and socio-emotional skills. It consists of 10 sessions (90 minutes each), implemented by teachers, aiming at promoting a positive adjustment of children to the fifth year of schooling (Losada, Leite & Moedas, 2014).

### **3 Brief description of how the intervention was designed**

In Portugal, the transition from the fourth to the fifth grade is a significant one. Aiming at promoting a positive adjustment to this transition, this intervention was designed by psychologists and social educators, based on the social skills model, the social-cognitive model, and the social learning model (Losada et al., 2014).

### **4 Brief description of how the intervention is being implemented**

The teaching staff requests the training. Psychologists and social educators are responsible for the training of the teachers that develop the intervention with students weekly.

### **5 Brief description of the evaluation methodology and outcomes**

The implementation of the intervention was evaluated through a set of measures applied to teachers and students over the school year. The effectiveness of the intervention has been evaluated in a longitudinal quasi-experimental study, including control and experimental groups in pre- and post-intervention and follow up evaluations. Results revealed an overall good adjustment of the children to the fifth grade (Losada et al., 2014).

## **1.5. Trilhos – Desenvolvimento de Competências Pessoais**

### **1 Intervention details**

Author: Inês Abraão (Northern Regional Health Administration)

Type of Intervention: Universal

At what stage is the intervention currently: Evaluated

### **2 Brief description of the intervention**

This intervention aims at preventing risk behaviours in adolescents. The intervention is implemented in a school setting by teachers, weekly, during three school years (27 months).

### **3 Brief description of how the intervention was designed**

This programme was designed by experts of the Regional Health Administration of the Northern Portugal, as an answer to the need of an intervention with adolescents to prevent risk behaviours such as substance abuse. It was based on previous preventive programmes, and on the recommendations of the National Institute of Drug Abuse (1997, cit in Abraão & Tavares, 2010).

The intervention includes 33 sessions (45 minutes each per week), implemented over the seventh, eighth and ninth grades, by teachers (after receiving certified training). The intervention includes four main components: information, problem solving, emotional regulation, and communication skills (Abraão & Tavares, 2010).

### **4 Brief description of how the intervention is being implemented**

It is currently being implemented in several schools in the North, Centre, and Lisbon areas. It is implemented by teachers during three school years. Teachers receive an initial training prior to the intervention implementation and then additional training during the intervention. Several schools have included the intervention as a part of its educational project.

### **5 Brief description of the evaluation methodology and outcomes**

The evaluation of the intervention includes data collection by teachers throughout the sessions (by the teachers) and the assessment of each unit by the students.

The evaluation of the intervention outcomes was made with pre- and post-test assessment of the students that received the intervention. Before and after the intervention, each student filled in a questionnaire that assessed: 1) their perception of risk related to behaviours that compromise their health, 2) frequency of risk behaviours, 3) assertiveness, 4) decision making, and 5) emotional coping. Results revealed the effectiveness of the programme (Abraão & Tavares, 2010).

## **1.6. Programa 4d - currículo de prevenção integrada em contexto escolar**

### **1 Intervention details**

Authors of the Portuguese version: Rosa Saavedra and Carla Machado (Associação de Apoio à Vítima, and School of Psychology, University of Minho)

Type of Intervention: Universal

At what stage is the intervention currently: Evaluated

### **2 Brief description of the intervention**

This intervention's purpose is to develop relationship skills in adolescents with ages between 13 and 16 years old, allowing a more positive answer to violence, conflict or risk behaviours. It is implemented in schools, by teachers, over the school year. With this intervention, adolescents can develop skills that enable them to make informed and healthy choices in their relationships (Saavedra, Martins, & Machado, 2013).

### **3 Brief description of how the intervention was designed**

The intervention was translated and adapted from the original version, The Fourth R (Wolfe, Crooks, Chiodo, Huges, & Jaffe, 2005). As a school based intervention, is developed over the school year. It comprises 28 sessions that are developed by teachers with their classes weekly.

### **4 Brief description of how the intervention is being implemented**

This intervention is implemented in schools. Schools contact APAV, and their specialists train the schools' teachers in the intervention programme. The intervention has 28 sessions in four different units: 1) healthy relationships, 2) healthy growth and sexuality, 3) substance use and abuse, 4) gender equality. Each session lasts for 90 minutes.

### **5 Brief description of the evaluation methodology and outcomes**

The effectiveness of this intervention has been evaluated using a quasi-experimental design with pre- and post-test assessment of the experimental and control groups. Results demonstrated significant positive changes regarding adolescents' knowledge, attitudes and intended behaviour (Saavedra et al., 2013).

## **1.7. Promoção de Experiências Positivas em Crianças e Jovens**

### **1 Intervention details**

Author: Rui Gomes (School of Psychology, University of Minho)

Type of Intervention: Universal

At what stage is the intervention currently: Evaluated

### **2 Brief description of the intervention**

This intervention aims to develop significant life skills in children (until 10 years old) and adolescents (until 20 years old), allowing them to improve their personal and social functioning. Specifically, the skills developed by the intervention programme are the following: stress management, motivation, time management, communication, and team work (Gomes, 2010a, 2010b).

### **3 Brief description of how the intervention was designed**

This intervention was developed to promote children and adolescent positive experiences and skills, in opposition to the interventions that aim at correcting or minimizing their deficits. This intervention is developed over 9 months. It is implemented by a monitor with a group of 8 to 10 children, in a weekly frequency. This programme can be developed in schools, but also in community contexts (Gomes, 2010a, 2010b).

### **4 Brief description of how the intervention is being implemented**

The intervention includes 33 sessions (until 10 years old) or 34 sessions (more than 10 years old). Over the sessions four steps are accomplished: 1) education and training, 2) practice of the learned skill, 3) skill transference to a given life situation, and 4) extend the skill to several life domains and situations. The monitor should adapt the sessions' goals to their participant's goals (Gomes, 2010a, 2010b).

### **5 Brief description of the evaluation methodology and outcomes**

The process evaluation includes the satisfaction of the participants and their assessment of each session. The results evaluation regard the effective learning of life skills and its benefits to the participants (Gomes, 2010a, 2010b).

## **1.8. Programa atitude positiva**

### **1 Intervention details**

Authors: Vítor Alexandre Coelho (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences of the University of Coimbra), Vanda Sousa, and Ana Paula Figueira

Type of Intervention: Universal

At what stage is the intervention currently: Evaluated

### **2 Brief description of the intervention**

This intervention aims at promoting social skills, self-esteem and the social and emotional self-concept of elementary school students (Coelho & Figueira, 2011).

### **3 Brief description of how the intervention was designed**

The programme was developed in reply to a request of a Portuguese municipality regarding the development of a fourth grade social and emotional learning programme to be implemented in its public schools. The programme team designed the intervention according to the social and emotional conceptual framework and then conducted meetings with teachers and school directors to understand the functioning and social characteristics of each school and adapt the programme to their characteristics (Coelho, Sousa & Figueira, 2016).

### **4 Brief description of how the intervention is being implemented**

The intervention includes 13 weekly 60-min sessions, delivered by trained educational psychologists, structured in four modules: 1) two sessions designed to increase self-awareness; 2) three sessions on self-management and social awareness development; 3) three sessions on self-esteem enhancement; and 4) two sessions on responsible decision making development (Coelho et al., 2016).

### **5 Brief description of the evaluation methodology and outcomes**

The effectiveness of the intervention was assessed through a quasi-experimental design, including control and experimental groups assessed before and after the intervention. At the end of the intervention students and teachers reported gains in the areas of self-control and social awareness. Teachers reported students' decrease on social anxiety, and students reported an increase on self-esteem and a decrease on social isolation (Coelho et al., 2016).

## **1.9. Programa salto de gigante**

### **1 Intervention details**

Authors: Karla Sandy Correia and Alexandra Marques Pinto (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences of the University of Lisbon)

Type of Intervention: Universal

At what stage is the intervention currently: Evaluated

### **2 Brief description of the intervention**

This intervention aims at developing social and emotional skills as well as improving the adaptation of children in the transition from pre-school to the first year. It integrates two versions, one for preschool (Salto de Gigante Pré) and another for the first year (Salto de Gigante 1) (Correia & Pinto, 2016).

### **3 Brief description of how the intervention was designed**

Both versions of the intervention are based on the ecological dynamic transition model, on the developmental model ABCD and accordingly to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning orientations (Correia & Pinto, 2016). The authors designed the intervention based on the effectiveness of other interventions in promoting social and emotional competences in a school context. Since the majority of these interventions was developed in the US, the authors decided to design an intervention to be implemented in Portugal (Correia & Pinto, 2016).

### **4 Brief description of how the intervention is being implemented**

The preschool intervention contains 15 sessions of 45-60 minutes and the first year intervention 18 sessions of 60 minutes. Both versions of the intervention contain activities of action and reflection, applied to real situations to allow its generalization (Correia & Pinto, 2016). The interventions are delivered throughout the school year in the classroom, by a psychologist (Correia & Pinto, 2016).

### **5 Brief description of the evaluation methodology and outcomes**

The effectiveness of the intervention was evaluated through a quasi-experimental design, including control and experimental groups assessed before and after the intervention. Results revealed an improvement in children's relationship with peers, academic behaviour, social skills, school adaptation, emotional knowledge, and learning abilities (Correia & Pinto, 2016).

## **1.10. MindUp**

### **1 Intervention details**

Authors of the Portuguese version: Joana Carvalho (Instituto Mindfulness), Alexandra Marques Pinto (Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences of the University of Lisbon), and João Marôco (Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada)

Type of Intervention: Universal

At what stage is the intervention currently: Evaluated

### **2 Brief description of the intervention**

This intervention includes mindfulness techniques based on attention consciousness that have been identified as relevant to promoting children's executive functions. Thus, it aims to develop the following competences in children: self-knowledge, self-control, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making (Carvalho, Pinto, & Marôco, 2016).

### **3 Brief description of how the intervention was designed**

The intervention was translated and adapted from the original intervention MindUp (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015). Even though the original version of the intervention has three levels from preschool to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the authors of the Portuguese version chose to translate and adapt the intervention only to children of elementary schools due to the lack of interventions in Portugal for that particular age range (Carvalho et al., 2016).

### **4 Brief description of how the intervention is being implemented**

The intervention includes 15 sessions delivered by teachers in their classrooms, over the school year. The sessions are distributed in four units, "Calm the mind", "Pay attention to our senses", "It's all a matter of attitude" and "Act with mindfulness". The teachers have credited 50 hours training to deliver the intervention. So far, the program has been implemented with 329 third grade students from two Portuguese municipalities (Carvalho et al., 2016).

### **5 Brief description of the evaluation methodology and outcomes**

The effectiveness of the intervention was evaluated through pre- and post-intervention assessment of the group that received the intervention. At the end of the intervention students revealed less negative affect and self-criticism, whereas teachers reported an improvement of students' self-management skills, positive peer relationships, and academic performance and involvement (Carvalho et al., 2016).

## **1.11. RESCUR**

### **1 Intervention details**

Authors of the Portuguese version: Celeste Simões, Paula Lebre, Anabela Santos and Margarida Gaspar de Matos (Faculty of Human Kinetics of the University of Lisbon)

Type of Intervention: Universal

At what stage is the intervention currently: Evaluated

### **2 Brief description of the intervention**

This intervention aims at promoting resilience in children from preschool to the sixth grade. Specifically, the intervention provides the essential tools to the development of the more vulnerable children (Simões, Lebre, Santos, & Matos, 2016).

### **3 Brief description of how the intervention was designed**

The intervention was collaboratively designed by six countries within a project funded by the European Commission (Ceifai et al., 2014). It was developed to answer to the challenges that Europe faces. Specifically, it aims at promoting and developing cognitive, social and emotional competence in children so that they can overcome adversity. It also pays special attention to children in special conditions such as special needs, refugees or minorities (Simões et al., 2016).

### **4 Brief description of how the intervention is being implemented**

The intervention is organized in six themes. Different manuals are available for three different age ranges (4-5, 6-8, and 9-12). Teachers receive certified training and then deliver the intervention over the school year. So far, in Portugal, the programme has been implemented in 27 classrooms from preschool to the fourth grade, to a total of 400 children (Simões et al., 2016).

### **5 Brief description of the evaluation methodology and outcomes**

The teachers that implemented the intervention and the students provided relevant information about the implementation of the intervention, through measures specifically developed to perform the process evaluation. Teachers also participated in focus groups, and reported significant improvements in children's cooperation, problem solving abilities, and more adjusted behaviours (Simões et al., 2016).

## **1.12. Dream Teens**

### **1 Intervention details**

Author: Margarida Gaspar de Matos (Faculty of Human Kinetics, University of Lisbon)

Type of Intervention: Universal

At what stage is the intervention currently: Evaluated

### **2 Brief description of the intervention**

Dream Teens is a network of adolescents that aims at empower them, promoting their participation in issues such as physical and mental health (Branquinho, Matos, Equipa Aventura Social, 2016).

### **3 Brief description of how the intervention was designed**

The Dream Teens network is integrated in a broader programme of health promotion in young people, the Social Venture ([www.aventurasocial.com](http://www.aventurasocial.com)), since 2014. It was developed according to the positive youth development perspective and aims at creating a network of young consultants (between the ages of 11 and 18) to work as a national team, enhancing young people's involvement and social responsibility through an active citizenship process, and increasing their social and civic participation in issues such as physical and mental health.

### **4 Brief description of how the intervention is being implemented**

Dream Teens, since 2014, integrated a group of 147 young people as collaborators, offering them visibility, empowering them and promoting their active participation regarding health issues. The team communicated with the senior national team through general meetings and technological means.

### **5 Brief description of the evaluation methodology and outcomes**

Over the implementation of the project, the satisfaction of the adolescents with the programme and with the meetings, as well as their willingness to continue to participate in the network was assessed. In order to assess the effectiveness of the programme on youth's health and well-being behaviour changes, initiative, leadership, and social participation, the adolescents filled in a questionnaire before and after the intervention. Results revealed the positive development of the adolescents involved in this project (Branquinho et al., 2016).

## **2. Universal interventions delivered**

### **2.1. WhySchool - Why Youth Mental Health Care School-Based with Primary Care Liaison**

#### **1 Intervention details**

Authors: Ricardo Gusmão (Principal Investigator, Faculty of Medicine, University of Porto)

Type of Intervention: Universal

At what stage is the intervention currently: Delivered

#### **2 Brief description of the intervention**

The WhySchool project (<http://www.whyschool.eutimia.pt/>) aims at promoting young access to mental health services, empowering professionals in public schools.

#### **3 Brief description of how the intervention was designed**

The programme is based on the cascade knowledge transfer model. Its objectives are to enhance accessibility and equality in mental health and provide support for youth, to reduce suicide potential years of life lost, to provide training to school professionals, and to promote the establishment of liaison collaborative programmes between health care and primary care professionals. The project has several partnerships established, mostly with Portuguese municipalities, training centres, schools and universities (<http://www.whyschool.eutimia.pt/>).

#### **4 Brief description of how the intervention is being implemented**

The programme was implemented until April 2016 in several schools in northern, centre and southern regions of Portugal. School professionals received credited training programmes on mental health. With such actions it is expected to provide integrated support for youth in the field of mental health (<http://www.whyschool.eutimia.pt/>).

## **2.2. Os amigos do Ziki (Zippy's friends)**

### **1 Intervention details**

Authors of the Portuguese version: Associação Escutar

Type of Intervention: Universal

At what stage is the intervention currently: Delivered

### **2 Brief description of the intervention**

Zippy's Friends (original version, <http://www.partnershipforchildren.org.uk/zippy-s-friends.html>) is a programme originally developed in the United Kingdom that has been implemented in 30 countries. The intervention is developed by the teacher of young children (5 to 7 years old). It aims at promoting the mental health and emotional well-being of young children, teaching them how to cope with everyday struggles, to identify and talk about their feelings and to explore ways of dealing with them, and also to be aware of other people feelings.

### **3 Brief description of how the intervention was designed**

The programme is being implemented in schools of two municipalities. Teachers deliver the programme, after certified training. Over a period of 6 months, teachers develop 45-minutes weekly sessions with their classes. The programme is built around a set of six stories. Each session begins with the teacher reading part of the story, and then the children take part in activities such as drawing, discussing themes and playing games. The aim of these activities is to help the children to explore and understand their feelings and behaviour.

The translation of the programme was developed by professionals of a non-profit association. Members of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Porto act as consultants to this programme, being also responsible for the evaluation of the implementation and the effectiveness of the programme. The evaluation of the process (implementation of the intervention) includes the satisfaction of the participants and the teachers' accomplishment of the established aims for each session. The evaluation of the intervention's effectiveness is currently taking place through a quasi-experimental design, with control and experimental groups.

### **3. Universal interventions designed**

#### **3.1. ES'COOL (Aventura Social)**

##### **1 Intervention details**

Authors: Gina Tomé and Margarida Gaspar de Matos (Faculty of Human Kinetics, University of Lisbon)

Type of Intervention: Universal

At what stage is the intervention currently: Designed (currently being delivered)

##### **2 Brief description of the intervention**

The purpose of this intervention is to develop a school environment that promotes well-being and healthy lifestyles among teenagers, through teachers and education professionals' training. This training aims at developing a personal and social programme that includes anxiety disorders' symptoms, mood disorders, well-being promotion, resilience, self-regulation, and school mental health. It will allow identification of students with signs of psychological distress and refer them to clinical services, allowing an early and more effective intervention in complex situations. It will also promote the establishment of a dialogue between parents and other education specialists regarding these topics, thus achieving psychological well-being in a school context. ([www.escool.pt](http://www.escool.pt)).

##### **3 Brief description of how the intervention was designed**

This intervention focuses teachers' education and training to promote adolescents well-being. Through the enrolment of other education professionals and also parents, it is expected to develop abilities to early identify mental health problems and to promote a healthy life style in schools ([www.escool.pt](http://www.escool.pt)).

## **4. Selective interventions evaluated**

### **4.1. ECOS - Estratégias Comunitárias de Observação Social**

#### **1 Intervention details**

Author: Sofia São Martinho (Agência de Desenvolvimento Integrado de Lordelo do Ouro, ADILO)

Type of Intervention: Selective (Substance abuse and addiction)

At what stage is the intervention currently: Evaluated

#### **2 Brief description of the intervention**

This intervention's purpose is to work with families in the community context, including all family members in the programme, enhancing their abilities. The intervention is based on the social development model, and understands deviant behaviour as a consequence of the interaction among biological, psychological and social factors. Thus, intervention is developed with vulnerable families, where parents are unemployed, children have school difficulties or children have been taken into care, in order to increase the children's resilience and prevent risk behaviours (ADILO, 2012).

#### **3 Brief description of how the intervention was designed**

The programme was developed to answer the specific needs of the area of Lordelo do Ouro, in the city of Porto. Its activities have different targets. The programme's family support office provides support to the family in their needs. The parental training programme targets parents. The diverse cultural experiences' programme, the imagination workshops and the young mediators programme target children and adolescents (ADILO, 2012).

#### **4 Brief description of how the intervention is being implemented**

This intervention was implemented for two years in the area of Lordelo do Ouro (in the city of Porto). However, currently is not being developed due to the lack of funding,

#### **5 Brief description of the evaluation methodology and outcomes if appropriate**

The effectiveness of this intervention has been evaluated with pre- and post-test assessment. Each family who received the intervention was followed for 7 months after the end of the intervention. Results revealed significant positive outcomes such as an improvement in the families' abilities to detect risk behaviours in their children, the use of parental skills, and improvement in the families' psychosocial environment with fewer stress factors. Children and adolescents presented an increase in personal and social skills, and more awareness regarding risk behaviours and its prevention (ADILO, 2012).

## **4.2. Tu decides**

### **1 Intervention details**

Authors of the Portuguese version: Fernando Joaquim Ferreira Mendes, Cátia Clara Ávila Magalhães, and Susana Isabel Ferreira Nicolau (IREFREA Portugal)

Type of Intervention: Selective (Substance use, abuse and addiction)

At what stage is the intervention currently: Evaluated

### **2 Brief description of the intervention**

This school based intervention aims at preventing substance use and abuse among adolescents (13, 14, 16 and 17 years old). It has 3 manuals (teachers, parents and students) that have all the information necessary to the intervention implementation. All manuals approach the intervention syllabus through comics and interactive activities ([www.programatudecides.blogspot.pt](http://www.programatudecides.blogspot.pt)).

### **3 Brief description of how the intervention was designed**

The intervention was developed accordingly to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) guidelines, and translated to Portuguese from the original programme “Tú decides” (Amengual & Calafat, 1997). It is not exclusively focused on information about drugs, but also addresses issues such as group pressure and the cognitive and affective factors that contribute to the decision making ([www.programatudecides.blogspot.pt](http://www.programatudecides.blogspot.pt)).

### **4 Brief description of how the intervention is being implemented**

The intervention is developed over the school year, targeting teachers, students and parents. After having a certified 14 hours training, teachers implement the intervention in the classroom (four sessions of two hours each). Teachers’ training also occurs during the programme implementation, as well as supervision. The school’s psychologists, after having a certified 14 hours training, implement the programme along four sessions with the parents ([www.programatudecides.blogspot.pt](http://www.programatudecides.blogspot.pt)).

### **5 Brief description of the evaluation methodology and outcomes**

In all sessions, students and parents filled in a questionnaire about their satisfaction with the session, and point out suggestions for improvement. The effectiveness of the intervention was evaluated with pre- and post-intervention assessments of the group that received the intervention. Students filled in a questionnaire about personal and social skills, group pressure, information about substance use and addiction, substance use and non-chemical addictions ([www.programatudecides.blogspot.pt](http://www.programatudecides.blogspot.pt)).

### **4.3. Find your own style**

#### **1 Intervention details**

Authors: Margarida Gaspar de Matos, Tânia Gaspar, Mafalda Ferreira, Gina Tomé, Inês Camacho, Marta Reis, Paula Melo, Celeste Simões, Ricardo Machado, Lúcia Ramiro, and The Social Adventure Team (Faculty of Human Kinetics, University of Lisbon)

Type of Intervention: Selective (Interpersonal violence prevention)

At what stage is the intervention currently: Evaluated

#### **2 Brief description of the intervention**

This intervention aims at promoting social and personal competences and preventing interpersonal violence. It was designed and tailored to the institutional context as a school-based intervention (delivered by teachers) targeting adolescents (11 to 16 years old). The intervention includes 12 sessions, two sessions of evaluation, and 10 sessions where five themes (body language, thoughts and dreams, emotions, interpersonal relationships, and management of leisure and work time) are debated. Active and participative methods are used throughout the intervention (Matos et al., 2012).

#### **3 Brief description of how the intervention was designed**

This community-based program was developed in an educational setting where children and adolescents come from economically and culturally disadvantageous homes. The programme resulted from a request and focused essentially on preventing interpersonal violence by means of promoting personal and social competences (Matos et al., 2012). During one year the research team implemented a set of focus groups that allowed to identify major problems such as violence, namely vandalism, and physical and verbal violence during the breaks and lunch time in the canteen, as well as indiscipline in the classroom. Posteriorly, a SWOT analysis was developed with the participation of parents, teachers, pupils and other professionals (psychologists and occupational therapists), resulting in an intervention including teacher training in conflict management, a system of behaviour monitoring and notation, and an intervention during breaks aiming at decreasing violence (Matos et al., 2011).

#### **4 Brief description of how the intervention is being implemented**

The intervention is implemented over a six months' period. After receiving training teachers deliver the intervention in the regular school timetable. Throughout the programme implementation the themes debated, role-played, monitored and aimed to be generalized through home work (Communication, cognition/worries, emotions,

social capital and work/ leisure). Active and participative methods are implemented, including procedures to promote concentration and team cohesion (Matos et al., 2012).

## **5 Brief description of the evaluation methodology and outcomes**

The effectiveness of this intervention has been evaluated with pre- and post-intervention assessments in a quasi-experimental design. Students in the intervention group revealed a significant increase in well-being, as well as a significant decrease of disruptive behaviour after the intervention (Matos et al., 2012).

## **5. Selective interventions delivered**

### **5.1. ManifestaSaude**

#### **1 Intervention details**

Authors of the Portuguese version: Carlos Estudante and Joana Fernandes

Type of Intervention: Selective (Substance use and abuse)

At what stage is the intervention currently: Delivered

#### **2 Brief description of the intervention**

This intervention is related to the prevention of alcohol and substance abuse among adolescents (from 12 to 14 years old) in school context (Estudante, 2015; Fernandes, 2015).

#### **3 Brief description of how the intervention was designed**

The intervention was translated and adapted to Portuguese from the original Spanish intervention "Saluda" (Espada & Mendez, 2003), and implemented in a school context.

#### **4 Brief description of how the intervention is being implemented**

The intervention is implemented in a classroom setting by psychologists. The intervention syllabuses include topics related to substance abuse prevention. It includes 10 sessions developed over a period of 12 months, related to the students' information, social skills, problem solving skills, self-control and public commitment (Estudante, 2015; Fernandes, 2015).

## **5.2. +Contigo**

### **1 Intervention details**

Authors affiliation: Centre Regional Health Administration and School of Nursing,  
University of Coimbra

Type of Intervention: Selective (Suicide prevention)

At what stage is the intervention currently: Delivered

### **2 Brief description of the intervention**

Based on a socio-emotional learning paradigm, the programme lasts for 6 months and aims at developing social skills and a positive attitude towards the self and the others, reducing anti-social behaviour and early preventing mental disorders (Santos, Erse, Façanha, Marques, & Simões, 2014; Santos, Erse, Simões, Façanha, & Marques, 2013). This programme aims at reducing the risk of suicide or parasuicidal behaviours among teenagers (12 to 15 years old), and is implemented in schools.

### **3 Brief description of how the intervention was designed**

Even though in the Portuguese centre region suicidal rates are relatively low (compared to other regions) the rate of parasuicidal behaviours is surprisingly high in the region. For this reason, the Centre Regional Health Administration and the School of Nursing of the University of Coimbra collaborated in the development of the programme. Partners include Centre Regional Direction of Education and the Suicidal Prevention Attendance from Coimbra's University Hospital and the Psychiatry Service from Aveiro's Hospital (Santos et al., 2014).

### **4 Brief description of how the intervention is being implemented**

The intervention's targets are adolescents, students from the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades. It aims at developing personal and social skills and self-esteem in order to prevent risk behaviours. As the first step, education professionals receive training and local health team are integrated. All school community is informed about the project, including parents. Over the school year, the intervention is carried out with the students in the classroom. Individual cases are identified and forwarded to specialized clinical services (Santos et al., 2013, 2014).

## **6. Indicative interventions delivered**

### **6.1. Resiliência e NEE's**

#### **1 Intervention details**

Authors: Celeste Simões, Paula Lebre, Anabela Santos and Margarida Gaspar de Matos  
(Faculty of Human Kinetics of the University of Lisbon)

Type of Intervention: Indicative

At what stage is the intervention currently: Delivered

#### **2 Brief description of the intervention**

This intervention aims at promoting social and emotional competences, autonomy, resilience and inclusion of adolescents with special needs. It is based on 10 themes/areas, organized in two major groups, external resources and internal resources (Simões, Lebre, Santos, & Matos, 2016).

#### **3 Brief description of how the intervention was designed**

The intervention was designed from a broader project “Risco e Resiliência em Adolescentes com Necessidades Especiais”, to fulfil a need of interventions to promote socioemotional competences in adolescents with special needs (Simões et al., 2016).

#### **4 Brief description of how the intervention is being implemented**

The intervention had poor dissemination. So far it has been implemented with few parents, teachers or technicians of adolescents with special needs. However, preliminary results suggest that adolescents acquire relevant competences (Simões et al., 2016).

## Conclusion

Several organizations and task forces have stated the importance of preventing mental health problems and promoting mental health in children and adolescence (e.g., WHO, 2005), namely their wellbeing, competences, resources and strengths (Barry, 2001). Accordingly, several interventions have developed aimed at promoting children's and adolescents' mental health.

In the last decades, in Portugal, different programmes have been developed. Additionally, several programmes that have been found to be effective in other countries have been translated/translated and adapted to the Portuguese context. However, even though professionals have made a significant effort to promote mental health in children and adolescents, no reviews are available on the existing interventions aimed at promoting children's and adolescents' mental health in Portugal.

So, the aim of this technical report was to perform a baseline survey regarding youth mental health interventions in Portugal. Using different databases, evidence was examined regarding every intervention programme (designed, delivered or evaluated), locally developed or translated/translated and adapted from an international intervention, targeting children's and adolescents' mental health promotion. Despite of our efforts, we experienced difficulties accessing the information, as the literature on youth mental health interventions in Portugal is scarce.

After initial screening, a total of 21 intervention programmes were identified. Most of them were universal interventions ( $n = 15$ , 71.43%), school-based ( $n = 17$ , 80.95%), locally developed ( $n = 14$ , 66.67%) and at evaluation stage ( $n = 16$ , 76.19%). Few interventions have been (or are being) delivered and are not evaluated yet ( $n = 5$ , 23.81%) lacking evidence regarding their effectiveness. More importantly, the interventions have poor dissemination. Except for the interventions translated/translated and adapted, the

other programmes were only implemented by their own authors, even though the intervention manuals are available.

With this review we expect to disseminate information on the existing interventions in Portugal aiming at promoting mental health in children and adolescents. We expect to bring together universities and communities, researchers and professionals, contributing to a cooperative work in order to promote youth mental health through evidence based interventions. We acknowledge, however, that the present report is just one survey, and, as so, should be complemented in the future with a systematic review to determine the evidence on the effectiveness of these programmes when all the evaluation outcomes are available.

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