

WORKING IN EUROPE TO STOP TRUANCY AMONG YOUTH (WE-STAY)

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Introduction: Truancy is a serious public health problem that affects adolescents from all countries around the world; however, little is known about the short- and long-term outcomes of potential underlying psychological and mental ill-health for those adolescents who truant. Working in Europe to Stop Truancy Among Youth (WE-STAY) project is developed, as a randomized controlled trial (RCT), in order to examine truancy, and its subsequent association with psychological distress and mental ill-health. The WE-STAY Consortium comprises 10 European countries: *Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden* serving as the coordinating centre.

Aims: The main objectives of WE-STAY are to gather epidemiological information on truancy on European adolescents; and to perform interventional school-based programs for adolescents, aimed at reducing truancy rates and improve mental health of students.

Methods: The WE-STAY project is implementing and evaluating outcomes of three different kinds of preventive interventions on truancy, which is compared with a minimal intervention serving as the control arm. Validated psychometric instruments incorporated into a self-report questionnaire is administered at baseline, 1- and 12-month follow-up assessments.

Conclusions: The WE-STAY project is expected to generate valuable information about the behaviour of European adolescents regarding attendance to school. The existing research on truancy is very scarce and affected by methodological shortcomings that make evaluating the effectiveness of their programs difficult. The main philosophy underlying the WE-STAY project is to consider truancy as a warning-sign for psychological and social distress in adolescents.