



Assessing and Enhancing Emotional Competence for Well-being in the Young:

A principled, evidence-based, mobile health
approach to prevent mental disorders and
promote mental well-being

ECoWeB Newsletter

November, 2018

Dear reader

Welcome to the first issue of the ECoWeB newsletter.
We are proud to present you with information and
news from this European project examining a mobile
health approach to prevent mental disorders and
promote mental well-being in youth.

If you have any questions regarding the ECoWeB
project please contact : info@ecowebproject.eu

We are happy to answer your questions and would
greatly value your feedback.

We hope that you enjoy reading!



A collaborative Project of
partners from 8 European
countries



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020
research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 754657.

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ECoWeB

There is growing international concern about the increasing **onset of mental disorders** in young people. The **incidence of anxiety and depression increases significantly from the middle of adolescence to young adulthood**, peaking at this time. Onset of anxiety and depression in young adulthood predicts a long-term course of symptoms in adult life: **early mental health problems have significant long-term negative effects on future health, education, employment and social outcomes.**

The **ECoWeB project** will investigate one approach to address global health challenge: it will develop, evaluate and disseminate a comprehensive **mobile web-based application (app) to enable engaging, personalized interventions to increase the emotional skills of adolescents and young adults.** These targeted interventions are expected to effectively **increase resilience and enhance mental well-being.**

The programme will be tested in two parallel trials (a primary prevention and a health promotion study).



The principal investigator of this project is **Prof. Dr. Ed Watkins**. He and his team manage the project at the University of Exeter in the UK. Contact: E.R.Watkins@exeter.ac.uk

Working together!

The project team includes **13 facilities in 8 European countries** (UK, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Greece, Czech Republic, Denmark and Switzerland).



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ECoWeB Objectives

- To promote mental well-being and prevent mental disorders by developing, implementing, and testing an innovative mobile web-based application that can be delivered on a large scale and can reduce the burden on health services, educational systems and social services
- To deliver an innovative population-oriented primary prevention intervention in young people that assess emotional competences (“emotional skills”) and then trains individuals in a personalized way based on an individual risk profile to enhance emotional skills via a mobile health app

Building directly on a fundamental understanding of emotion in combination with a personalized approach and leading-edge digital technology, this project adopts a novel and innovative approach, with the potential to deliver a breakthrough in effective prevention of mental disorder



Overall Concept

Emotional Competence Model

The central hypothesis of the ECoWeB project is that there are different skills and abilities related to understanding, managing and regulating emotions, called Emotional Competencies (EC), and that these EC abilities causally influence mental wellbeing and mental health, and, therefore, that training relevant EC skills (especially where there is an identified deficit) will lead to benefits in mental well-being and mental health.

ECoWeB adopts one well-developed ability model, the Emotional Competence Process model (ECP; Scherer, 2007), which is based on an empirically validated theoretical process model of emotion, that draws on established findings about the mechanisms underlying normal and successful through to unhelpful emotional functioning.

The ECP model distinguishes 3 EC component processes (abilities), which are all implicated in mental well-being and mental health:

(1) Appropriate emotion production which requires an appropriate self-image and accurate appraisal of emotion eliciting events, including appraisals of their causes and of one's control over their potential consequences.

(2) Adequate coping and regulation abilities, especially the use of functional coping strategies, such as careful reappraisal of the event, choice of constructive responses, relative to unhelpful strategies such as worry and rumination.

(3) Adequate emotion knowledge (awareness, recognition and understanding skills). These skills include an understanding and awareness of the personal and situational factors that determine the elicitation of a specific emotion, accurate recognition and perception of one's own emotions and the emotions expressed by others, and empathic understanding and perspective taking for the emotional reactions of different people.

All parts of ECoWeB will be related to the ECP model: we will assess individuals on these different EC elements and determine whether each person has strengths or deficits on particular EC components. Interventions offered will directly target these EC components. Our long-term goal is to develop comprehensive assessment and intervention for all major facets of EC that link to reduced well-being and/or psychopathology.



Mobile Technologies

ECoWeB will use a mobile app platform to deliver the EC intervention, because it has multiple benefits that help to provide an effective and scalable population-oriented intervention that can reach as many young people as possible:

(i) Unlike traditional interventions where the delivery of the therapy session or dose of medication to an individual means that it is used up and cannot be delivered again, apps can be used repeatedly by a nearly unlimited number of people simultaneously. An app has potential to be a low-cost, highly scalable and accessible to nearly all young people;

(ii) Apps can be used 24/7 at anytime, anywhere in the world, maximising convenience for the user, and can easily be adapted across languages;

(iii) Apps are integrated into daily life and the real world through being always available and on hand via smartphones, and can track behaviour as it happens and be responsive to events as they happen, which is perfect for enhancing day-to-day emotional skills.



Personalization

Personalized medicine is the use of interventions tailored to the specific needs of the individual. Personalized interventions are hypothesized to be more acceptable, efficacious, and cost-effective than generic interventions. Key steps in the development of personalized medicine are increased collection of high-quality, reliable, and valid data to identify markers that predict intervention response, whether biomarkers or psychological profiles, and to inform the decision-making processes for treatment selection, the development of alternative treatment options, and the development and testing of selection models against large samples.

ECoWeB will break new ground in applying personalization principles to mental well-being.



Gamification

ECoWeB will employ well-established principles to improve adherence and engagement with the app, such as making them aesthetically pleasing, including rewards, feedback, animations, gamification of the digital EC modules, automated tailoring, real-time engagement, logs of past app use, reminders to engage, and simple and intuitive interfaces.



Youth Advisory Boards

ECoWeB will adopt a co-design approach related to participatory design and cooperative inquiry from the beginning of the project.

ECoWeB includes youth in decision-making: we have created four Youth Advisory Boards (YABs) that will participate in key tasks of the project. The YABs will be representative of the potential users of the apps in terms of age, gender, and will be recruited in four countries (UK, Germany, Spain, Belgium).

The YABs will help us understand and design solutions for the social challenges of their peer group. In particular, they will ensure that the content and look of the app is relevant, meaningful, and engaging for young people. They will shape the app, share their opinions about current events and make sure that we are on the right track when communicating information to young people and addressing their needs.

News

- **Kick-off Meeting in Munich**

The first ECoWeB meeting took place in Munich from the 15th to the 17th of January (see picture below). Representatives from all 11 institutions and 8 European countries took part as we reviewed the key deliverables, timeline, current actions, plans and responsibilities for the project. Relevant content and approaches from every Work Package were introduced.



- **Consortium Meeting at the University of Exeter**

A Steering Committee meeting took place on the 1st and 2nd of October 2018 at the University of Exeter (UK), in order to work closely together towards the goals of this international, Europe- wide project. The meeting helped to share the scope and vision for the upcoming cohort randomized trials. Also, we had the first ECoWeB Expert Advisory Board meeting. International experts in clinical trials, digital interventions, and working with young people from UK, Australia, Germany and the Netherlands provided very helpful and insightful suggestions and



feedback. The ECoWeB team gratefully thanks our excellent Expert Advisory Board.

- **1st International Youth Advisory Board Meeting: December 2018**

ECoWeB Project adopts a co-design approach related to participatory design and cooperative inquiry. Youth Advisory Boards (YABs) in 4 European countries will work on the design and application of the mobile app to improve emotional skills and prevent mental health problems. Meetings with youth representatives have been conducted in Belgium, Germany, Spain and the UK in the last few months. In December, two representatives from each of the local YABs will meet in the first International YAB meeting to exchange impressions and ideas about the project and to provide relevant feedback about ECoWeB intervention content and App design.

- **Annual Meeting in Valencia: February 2019**

The date for the next General Assembly has now also been confirmed as 27-28th February 2019 in Valencia. Participants from different fields (Psychology, Health technology assessment, Information and communications technology, Health care) will meet to prepare for the start of recruitment into the Europe-wide ECoWeB longitudinal cohort study.



Contact information

More information?

For more information on the project visit www.ecowebproject.eu

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Questions and Comments?

If you have any questions regarding the ECoWeB project please contact: info@ecowebproject.eu

Newsletter

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<http://www.ecowebproject.eu/news-events/newsletters/>

