



**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

May, 2020

Dear reader

Welcome to the second 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



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COVID-19 and mental health

Many people may be experiencing increased anxiety, stress and low mood because of the coronavirus pandemic and the ensuing lockdown. This is natural and understandable given uncertainties and fears about the disease, concern about loved ones, worries about impact on education and employment, and the effects of isolation and changes in routine.

It is important to look after your mental health. Here are some suggestions on how best to cope with stress and anxiety at this difficult time:

- **Stay Socially connected:** Keep in touch with the people closest to you, through whatever means that you can, including phone calls, social media, messages and video calls.. It is especially important to talk to friends and family about anxiety and difficult feelings to get support.
- **Maintain a healthy lifestyle:** Your daily routines may look quite different but that doesn't mean your diet and sleep patterns need to suffer. Keep up regular exercise, for example, try online exercise classes or home exercise videos on YouTube. Make sure you have 3 regular meals a day and a good routine of going to bed and getting up at the same time. Keep Active: Keep busy doing the things that are important and interesting for you. Learn something new- there are many free courses online including those at [There are also some ideas for indoor activities here:](#)
- **Avoid spending most of your time searching for updates and news:** whilst you want to keep on top of the news, checking the web/social media for updates regularly is likely to generate more anxiety. Sign out of social media news channels and notifications on your phone and stay in touch with developments less regularly. Plan to check at specific times, perhaps just once or twice a day.

Here is additional advice on coping with anxiety about COVID-19 and lockdown:

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_8



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).



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.

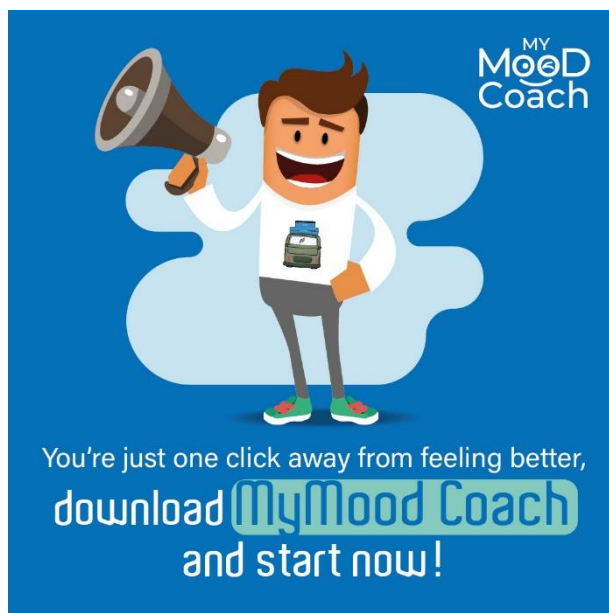
ECoWeB includes youth in decision-making: we have created four Youth Advisory Boards (YABs) that will participate in key tasks of the project. The YABs will be representative of the potential users of the apps in terms of age, gender, and will be recruited in four countries (UK, Germany, Spain, Belgium).

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.

MyMoodCoachApp

ECoWeB aims to:

- Better **understand young people's emotions and emotional skills** by tracking emotions on a mobile app and through web assessments over 1 year
- **Promote well-being and prevent poor mental health** by providing tools and exercises to practice within the mobile app
- It is open to **young people aged 16-22 living in UK, Germany, Spain and Belgium**, who DO NOT have current or past psychiatric disorders or active suicidality.



Emotions are especially important for young people because they go through major life changes like leaving home, starting work, developing romantic relationships, and set up how they will respond the rest of their lives.

Recognising, understanding and managing emotions is key to improving well-being, self-confidence, relationships, and success in education and career. These skills make up our *Emotional Fitness*.





To promote *Emotional Fitness*, we are using an app, the **MyMoodCoach app** (iOS or Android), powered by Monsenso, an app company, to monitor and learn about emotions in daily life and to improve emotional skills, coupled with web-based assessments over a year.

All participants receive the **MyMoodCoach app**, which helps monitor and learn about emotions in daily life. By using the app regularly for a few minutes each day over several weeks participants will learn what emotions they have most often and what influences when they feel better or worse.

Recruitment starts

We are looking for 2000 16-22 year olds, who want to learn more about emotions or build emotional skills, and who don't have a history of clinical depression, from UK, Spain, Germany, Belgium, to take part in the study and to be followed over one year.

To enter the study, it is necessary to complete a state-of-the-art web-based assessment that investigates mood, and how well participants manage, understand and recognise emotions. It takes about 40 mins to 1 hour.

In the UK, **recruitment starts 1st of June.**



For more information, please visit: <https://www.mymoodcoach.com/>

Contact information

More information?

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

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/proyectoecoweb/>

Twitter: [@ECOWEB_Project](https://twitter.com/ECOWEB_Project)

Use our hashtag: [#ECOWEB_Project](https://twitter.com/ECOWEB_Project)

Questions and Comments?

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

Newsletter

This newsletter and subsequent ones are available online under the following link:

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

