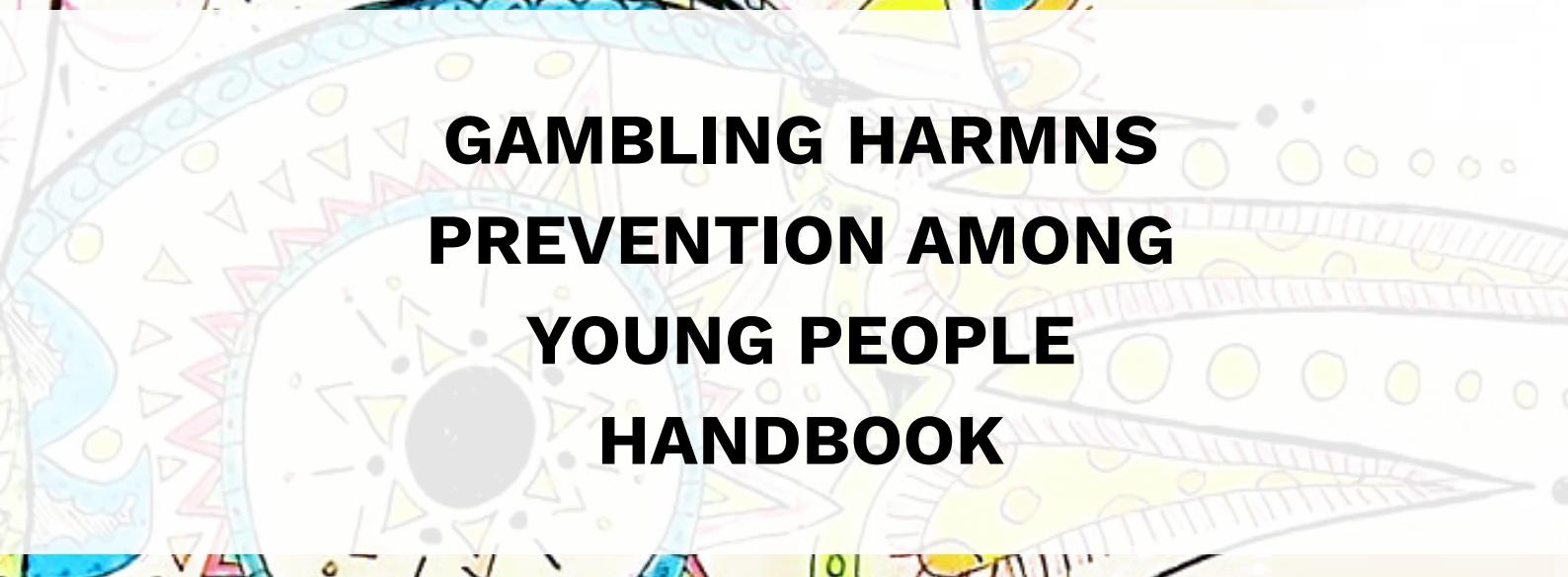




GAMBLING HARMNS PREVENTION AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE HANDBOOK





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1 | INTRODUCTION

Gambling is the activity of betting money or any item of value, with the intention of winning over an activity that involves an uncertain outcome (Winter et al., 2012). It is inherently a risk-taking behavior (of higher or lower risk, depending on the value of the bet), practiced since ancient times, almost by all societies of humans. Due to its risky nature, although



it may be practiced for recreational reasons, it can prove destructive to the gambler, their family, their community and to society in general.

This handbook is designed for people with personal experience about gambling harms. It will equip you with the information needed to effectively interact with and inform young people about the risks connected to gambling by utilizing your own experiential knowledge and insights.

The contents of this handbook have been created to cover a number of significant topics of gambling harm reduction. You will be provided with an in-depth understanding of the reasons and fundamental problems that lead young people to gambling while also emphasizing the potential implications of frequent gambling. You will gain knowledge of methods and interventions that are successful in preventing and decreasing gambling-related harms among youth through interactive sessions and hands-on activities. Along with emphasizing the value of early intervention, the handbook will equip you with the knowledge and skills necessary to help young vulnerable people.

This handbook includes in-depth information on various gambling-related subjects, and also the skills, information, and tools required to successfully educate young people of the harms linked to gambling utilizing your own personal experience.

As an expert by experience in this topic, you have first-hand knowledge of the risks linked to gambling. Your personal experiences offer a distinctive





viewpoint that can't be matched by just theoretical knowledge. By sharing your personal experiences, you can engage with young people in greater detail and it's easier to gain their confidence and trust.

Personal experiences might not always be supported by knowledge of best practices, methods based on evidence, or efficient approaches. Through this handbook, you can improve your knowledge about youth gambling and gambling prevention.

Furthermore, as an expert by experience, you can act as an inspiring role model for young individuals – Through your own experience, you can show that change is possible and that there is hope for those who are dealing with the negative effects of gambling. This can reduce stigma and improve the confidence of young people.

Importance of gambling harm prevention among young people

In recent years, the frequency of youth participation in gambling activities has increased as a result of the accessibility of online gambling platforms and a lack of knowledge about its potential negative effects. Despite the fact that gambling has an impact on people of all ages, young people are more likely to participate in risky gambling (Monaghan & Wood, 2010)

Studies show that young people between the ages of 18 and 24 gamble more frequently than older adults, especially by online gambling (Calado et al., 2017, Monaghan & Wood, 2010). Given the popularity of the online market, it can be a big temptation for young people, and increased attention and tailored efforts should be used to prevent youth from participating in gambling-related activities.



Frequent Gambling may create long-term impacts on the life of young individuals and may have numerous negative consequences, including economic problems, strained relationships, issues in education and the workplace, and even mental health illnesses. We can reduce these potential dangers and put young people on a healthy path by getting involved early and giving them the appropriate knowledge and skills to prevent systematic gambling at an early stage. (Messerlian et al, 2005)

Gambling prevention in youth encourages thoughtful decision-making and aids in the development of positive habits. By educating young people about the dangers and possible consequences of gambling, we give them the power to make wise decisions and adopt a responsible mindset towards gambling.

Therefore, it is essential to train Experts by Experience with the knowledge and abilities needed to successfully avoid or reduce the harms associated with gambling among young individuals with the goal of addressing this issue. Due to the increased rates among young people, it's important to develop early strategies that can prevent the rise of pathological gambling.

2 | SOCIAL REALITY OF GAMBLING IN EUROPE

The European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD) is a cross sectional study of use of addictive substances and at-risk



behaviors (gambling, gaming and internet use) among students (15-16 y.o.a.) across European countries (within EU and not). It has been conducted every four years since 1995. The most recent project (2019) has shown that across Europe, 22% of students have gambled at least once in the past year. Of the countries of our consortium, Cyprus had the highest percentage of gamblers at 33% and the highest in Europe (along with Greece). Following is Finland, ranking 3rd at the list of all countries with a prevalence of 30%. Portugal had a percentage of 22% and Spain was the lowest of the four at 17%, which is relatively on the low side of gambling across Europe. In all countries of Europe, boys (29%) gambled more often than girls (15%) in the past year.

In the same research, excessive and problematic gambling were also assessed. Of all students across European countries who had gambled the past year, 15% had gambled excessively (3.8% of the whole sample) and 5% (1.4% of the entire sample) had gambled at a problematic level. Cyprus had 14% of students engaging in excessive and 6.6% engaging in problematic gambling. Finland was at 12% and 3.9% respectively. Portugal youth gambled excessively at 13% and problematically at 3.2% and Spain had scores of 10% and 3.2% respectively.

In the following paragraphs of this section, we will present findings for studies conducted in the countries of Gambling Free Feed Project, and involve a bigger range of ages (younger adolescents and young adults).

Different systems, legislation, and regulation in each partner country



Our program is a collaboration of partners from four EU countries: Finland, Spain, Cyprus, and Portugal. Below, we present the different legislations and regulations of gambling in each country.

First, we start by presenting the age restriction for participation in gambling activities and the methods used to monitor those.

Finland: the age restriction for participating in any gambling activity is 18 (THL, 2020). The practice of applying age restriction is monitored through supervision and checking of age at entry points to special gambling facilities like “mini casinos,” or at lottery selling stations by personnel. There is mandatory identification on all individually distributed slot machines.

Spain: the age restriction is also 18. In all premises where gambling takes place, it is compulsory to inform of the prohibition of access to minors. In addition, various control systems are in the casino or bingo venues for the identification of the person in order to avoid minors or vulnerable persons.

Cyprus: the age restriction for casino entrance and gambling is 21. It is mandatory that every person entering the casino has their ID available for verification of their age, if required. For other gambling agencies that include online & offline gambling activities, the age restriction is 18 y.o.a. Also, online casinos are not legal in Cyprus.

Portugal: according to the SRIJ (Games Regulation and Inspection Service, from the Ministry of Economy) the legal age to gamble is for people over 18 years of age, for onsite and online gambling. In this way, it is indicated



that only adults can participate in games of chance of any kind. When it comes to online gambling, this is usually verified by the age that the person provides upon registration. There's also a law which led to the creation of a platform that, at the time of registration, allows the operator to verify the player's age, through existing public databases. In terms of onsite gambling, the person must show their ID before entering.

	Finland	Spain	Cyprus	Portugal
Age restriction	18	18	18 & 21 (for casino)	18
How is it checked?	Supervision & checking of age through ID	Identification, supervision and checking of age through ID	Checking of age through ID	Checking of age through ID (onsite games) and registration forms (online games)

Offline, online and informal games

There are a lot of games available for gambling, organized in offline or online venues, as well as non-organized, not monitored activities, which in most countries are considered to be against the law, or they are freely available as non-regulated. According to the International Gambling Studies (2017), there is no universally accepted classification of gambling



games. Below we describe some popular games, but the list is by no means comprehensive.

- *Number games/ lotteries or instant lotteries*: in most European countries there are organized lotteries (such as Lotto, Joker) for which people choose a set amount of numbers and when the raffle happens the more numbers, they had scored the higher amount they earn. Instant lotteries are similar, but the raffle happens at real time with a preset table of chosen numbers to match the raffle (Kino, Bingo). Most of these games are played in offline venues, although some might offer the opportunity to submit bets online.
- *Scratch Cards*: Mostly offered by approved agents, scratch cards offer the opportunity to earn money by finding the same symbols, numbers or any other media.
- *Roulette or dice*: Games that use prompts to exercise your luck against other people, or against the venue.
- *Slot machines*: Betting money and winning if a certain pattern of symbols of any sort appears after you click a button or pull a lever. Popular casino games, which are available online and in illegal venues.
- *Card games*: Played primarily in casinos (land or online), or in other venues (mostly illegally), games such as blackjack or poker are popular card games.



- *Sport betting*: The betting of money over the forecasting of the outcome of an athletic event.
- *Animal races*: Betting money on races of animals, mostly horses guided by a jockey.
- *Animal fights*: Illegal in most developed countries, animal fights have been popular betting opportunities.
- *Informal games*: in occasions you might encounter gambling opportunities for which you win not money, but a novelty item, or items of value and is available to everyone as they are non-regulated (e.g. rolling a ball and winning a doll if the ball lands on a number you had previously declared; Christmas raffles for a big prize). Such gambling opportunities might appear more innocent as there is no winning of money, but the same emotions occur when you are in the act and they might lead people, especially younger ones to normalize gambling, or develop attitudes more accepting of it, which makes the vulnerable for gambling in the future.

Classification of games

One classification of games, which might lead to certain fallacies regarding gambling, is the distinguish between pure luck and skills games. Although every gambling event depends on luck, for some games, people have higher chances if they are more skillful or more knowledgeable.

Luck games

The rolling of a coin or a dice is a game that depends only on luck and the laws of probability as in every single event of rolling you have the same chance of scoring one particular outcome. Slot machines, roulettes, scratch cards, lotteries, raffles, are all pure luck games, as regardless of what you do, you always have the same probability of winning or losing. For example, if you roll a coin, every single time of a roll the probability of rolling heads is 50%. Some people fall into the fallacy of believing that if the outcome is heads for a number of times the probability of rolling tails the next time is higher, which is never the case. The probability is always 50%. Similarly, many people believe that if they stay at a slot machine long enough, the machine will eventually give them a lot of money. This is never the case. You have the same probability of winning at a slot machine on your first bet as on your 1000th bet.

Skills games

Skills games are also based on the element of luck, but the probability of winning is higher in case you are more skillful on the subject of the bet. For example, for animal races or sports events, a person who knows the sport and the power of each competing team/person has higher chance of winning, compared to a person who does not know much about a sport event and randomly choose one result over the other. Similarly, for poker players, a person who can read other people's expression, or who can bluff will have a higher chance of winning over people who are not skillful on that, or a person who can memorize cards may be able to compute whether a high or low number card will roll next on a blackjack table.



Having explained that, we need to clarify that it is never sure what the outcome will be as in sports events, every event is unique and a sportsperson, or an animal might have a bad day, or an accident. Thus, the result is never guaranteed. Similarly with card games that involve skills, it is never sure what cards you will receive and what cards your playmates will have. That is pure luck, which needs to be accounted for and this is the biggest fallacy skilled players fall into. They believe that they know all it is to know about sports, or have great confidence in their skillset, so that they discount the element of luck, or they build a false belief that they can manipulate luck.

Types of gambling activities preferred by young people

In Finland, 15–17-year-olds engage in lottery games despite the age limit (THL, 2020). Veikkaus lottery games mean both card-board scratch cards and online lotteries. Amongst all age groups, the weekly lottery games and/or Joker are the most popular ones, followed by scratch cards and slot machine games outside the casino.

In Spain young people prefer sports betting, instant lotteries (scratch cards) and casinos, slots, poker, roulette and other games, offered in online venues (PNSD, 2020).

In Cyprus the most preferable games among young people are number games/lotteries such as lotto, joker, or kino, both for adults and for minors (ages 15 to around 18) (NAAC, 2019 r).



In Portugal for offline gambling, for the overall population, the most prevalent are sports bets and lotteries (EuroMillions and scratch cards), (SRIJ, 2023).

Besides, according to the "V Inquérito Nacional ao Consumo de Substâncias Psicoativas na População Geral" (V National Survey on the Consumption of Psychoactive Substances in the General Population), done by the Service in Addictive Behaviors and Dependencies (SICAD), in 2023, where 12000 people were interviewed. The prevalence of games of chance (cash games) in 2022 was 55.6% in the population between 15 and 74 years old. This was 7.6% more compared to 2017, but did not reach the 2012 value (65.7%).

The Intervention Service for Addictive Behaviors and Dependencies (SICAD - 2023) reported that 5% of 13-year-olds already bet for money. The prevalence increases with age, and, at 18 years of age, it is almost 21%. Plus, the data shows that boys gamble more than girls and that the prevalence of online betting has increased in recent years — from 15% in 2015 to 18.3% in 2021.

Online vs. Offline gambling

Finland: 36% of all Finnish gamblers are playing online and overall, minors prefer online games i.e., games that can be played without identifying yourself (THL,2020). Six per-cent played non-exclusive gambling games on the internet either abroad or in Aland (part of Finland but with special autonomous status). 5% were gambling on entirely foreign platforms in 2019. The majority of those playing outside the exclusive system were young and male.

Spain: Offline gambling predominates online (PNSD, 2020).

Cyprus: Students (ages 15 to 18 or 19) prefer offline gambling at 33% and online at 16% of the population (NAAC, 2019 r).

Portugal: Online gambling is more prevalent than onsite (SRIJ, 2023). According to SICAD (2023), online betting has also increased in recent years — going from 15% in 2015, to 18.3%, in 2021. The prevalence of gambling on the internet is increasing with age and, at the age of 13, around 5% of young people already bet online, while, at 18, the percentage is 21%. 13.9% of users being treated for addiction to gambling are under 24 years of age.

Statistical information from each country

Age Group

In Finland it is generally differentiated between minors and adults as the legislation sets the age limit at 18 to allow gambling (THL, 2020). A survey conducted in 2019 suggests that 78.4% of the Finnish population engages in some sort of gambling activities. Minors gamble as well, despite the age limit, due to weak age control measures. According to the survey, 41% of 15–17-year-olds had gambled regardless of the age restriction (18 y.o.a.). The prevalence of problematic gambling was the highest in the age groups 18 to 24 (5.3%) and 25 to 34 (4.8%).

Spanish youth and young adults are one of the age groups most affected by gambling addiction. According to various studies, the average age of onset of gambling is around 18 years old and gambling addiction has been found to particularly affect people between 18 and 35 years old. This may be because young people are more likely to seek out new experiences and take risks, they may also be exposed to gambling advertising and promotions more frequently on TV, social media, etc. (Spanish Observatory on Drugs and Addictions. Government Delegation for the National Plan on Drugs, 2022).

In Cyprus the following percentages refer to how many people in each age group presented have gambled at least once during the last 12 months: Age group 15-17: 5%; Age group 18-35: 31%; Age group 36-50: 25%; Age group 51-64: 24%; Age group 65+: 15% (NAAC, 2018). Regarding students in Cyprus (that is people from 15 to about 18 y.o.a) 33% had gambled offline at least once the past year. In online gambling, 16% of students had gambled the past year (ESPAD, 2020). Of the underaged male gamblers, 9.3% are classified as problematic gamblers (NAAC, 2019). The percentage of gambling in the general population was found at 23% of all Cypriots and of those, 3.2% had gambled intensively (2-3 times per week) during the last year (NAAC, 2019).

In Portugal the percentage for 15 – 24 years old was found at 41% and for 25 – 34 years old at 44.7%. In the population aged 15 to 34, the prevalence of gamblers is lower than that of the total population (41.6%), remaining stable in relation to 2017 (42.8%) but lower than that recorded in 2012 (61.7%). In this population, women demonstrate patterns which are closer to men, when compared to the total population: In 2022 there were 82.5



women for 100 men who play, a ratio that has been decreasing (SICAD, 2023).

Demographic Background

In Finland, in 2019 problematic gambling prevalence was the highest amongst unemployed and people who had been laid off work (THL, 2020). Amongst minors, digital gaming is more common than offsite gambling. However, problematic gambling, digital gaming, excessive alcohol consumption and mental problems often co-occur amongst young adults between 18-24 years of age.

In Spain, gambling addiction has been a major problem in recent decades. According to recent studies regarding the Spanish Observatory on Drugs and Addictions (2022), approximately 0.3% of the Spanish population has a problem with pathological gambling and other studies suggest that between 1.5% and 2% of the population has some kind of gambling-related problem. In Spain, there is a link between social inequalities and gambling addiction. Studies show that people with low socio-economic and educational levels have a higher prevalence of problem gambling compared to those with a higher standard of living.

Ethnic minorities, especially immigrants, have also been found to have a higher rate of addiction compared to the general population. This may be due to factors such as lack of social support networks and lack of access to mental health and addiction prevention services.

In Portugal, according to SICAD (2015, p.32), divorced/separated people gamble more for cash when compared to those who are married or living



in a union of fact (71% vs 69%) Gingle (60%) and widowed (51%) had the lowest percentages.

Native portuguese (p.33) people also gamble more than migrants (6.3% vs 54.4%). When it comes to region of residence (p.34), people from the south of the country gamble more (Lisbon with 72%, Alentejo with 71%, etc.).

When it comes to formal education of the population (n=942, p.35): 1.4% did not attend school; 23.7% have the 1st cycle; 31.1% have the 2nd and 3rd cycle; 26.8% have secondary education; and 17% have higher education. As such, people with higher levels of education tend to gamble for money more.

Plus, employed people gamble (p.37) for cash more (73%). The prevalence of gambling among the unemployed (69%) is also slightly higher than that seen for the total population (66%). The lowest prevalences are recorded among students (45%), for example.

In Cyprus, the demographic background of the people who gamble, according to research by the Cyprus National Betting Authority that was conducted in 2022 (n=2950), among the high rate of 55.3% of gamblers in Cyprus, are most likely to be male aged 18-34 y.o.a. Unfortunately, at the moment we don't have other information like the employment, marital, educational status etc.



Gender

In Finland 74.5% of women and 82.2% of men engaged in gambling activities, 4.0% of men and 2.1% of women engaged in problematic gambling in 2019, as well as 1.9% of men and 0.9% of women suffered from probable pathological gambling (THL, 2020). The prevalence of online gambling in 2019 was 36.3% (women 27.2%, men 46.0%).

In Spain, a higher percentage of men than women are affected by the disorder. According to the latest DGOJ study, men continue to be the main gambling players in Spain, accounting for 63.8%, while women account for 36.2%. Although the gender gap has narrowed compared to previous years, there is still a clear difference in the participation of women and men in gambling.

Cyprus: During the period of one year prior 49% of boys and 22% of girls had gambled at least once in offline gambling venues and 29 % of boys versus 7.3 % of girls had gambled at least once in online platforms (ESPAD, 2020).

When it comes to Portugal, the prevalence is higher in men (62.7%) than in women (49%), with the women/men ratio being the same in 2012 and 2022 (78/100), after an increase in 2017 (88.6), according to SICAD (2023). Besides when it comes to young people, boys gamble more than girls.

Protection of minors from Gambling advertisement

The gambling industry has been using advertisements to impact attitudes of adolescents, young people and adults towards gambling. This is achieved by direct advertising (TV, roadside board, etc.) or through indirect advertising and gambling content on social media (e.g., through influencers or celebrities). Gambling advertisement through social media platforms in particular, has been found to exercise higher appeal to adolescents and young adults compared to older adults (Rossi & Nairn, 2021). The advertisements seem to work their purpose, as younger people (ages 11 to 24), who are exposed to gambling ads and develop higher brand recognition have increased chances to actively gamble or declare that they will gamble in the future (MacGregor et al., 2020). For the protection of minors, the countries participating in this project have placed protection measures that are described below.

Regulations in participating countries

In Finland, gambling may not be marketed to minors and marketing may not be used to attribute a positive image to heavy and frequent gambling. Information may however be provided about betting events, locations, terms and fees, the probability of winning, and the winnings relating to such games (THL, 2020). A lot of young people probably use lottery cards, as information about the wins is allowed and often directed towards young people.

In Spain, there is a law that establishes a limitation and regulation on advertising both in time slots for the protection of children and in the different commercial communications. Advertising on social media and other virtual platforms remains to be defined and legislated, (ESTUDES,



EDADES, 2022). 18 years of age, the age of majority. In all premises, it is compulsory to inform about the prohibition of access to minors under 18 years of age. In addition, various control systems are in place for the identification of the person in order to avoid minors or vulnerable persons.

In Cyprus, there are several restrictions in place concerning the advertising of land-based casinos and betting operators. These restrictions are encompassed within the legal framework, which comprises laws, regulations, Advertising and Promotion Codes, Directives, as well as the legal provisions set by the Cyprus Radio Television Authority. From the perspective of the Cyprus Gaming Commission (CGC), it is essential that any advertising does not portray the casino resort as primarily a gambling activity but rather as a comprehensive entertainment destination. Moreover, advertising should refrain from targeting or involving minors, and it is permissible only after the family zone restrictions where children might be watching have been lifted. It's important to note that this isn't limited to CGC alone, as various legislations in Cyprus are designed to safeguard minors from exposure to gambling.

In Portugal, the Gaming Regulation and Inspection Service (SRIJ), has launched a new manual of good practices for advertising games and betting. The new SRIJ advertising recommendations for online casinos and betting are aimed above all at protecting minors from the negative implications that derive from social isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, namely the intensive use of the internet by children and adolescents. Some of the recommendations are advertisements for casinos and online gambling on radio and television only after 10:30 pm.

Casinos and online gaming companies should not advertise on television and radio between 7 am and 10.30 pm, that is, they should only have advertising space at night and during the early hours (Brand SHARE, 2022).

Besides these efforts, and according to João Goulão, from SICAD (2023), there are still many challenges in Portugal, such as the control mechanisms of legal websites. These often rely on a sense of judgement and proaction from youth's family members, while, on illegal platforms, there is not enough blocking. Because of this SICAD mentions that controlling access can be easily bypassed in Portugal when it comes to young people. Validation and entry registration systems on platforms can not control the user's age and there is not enough legislative measures which are actually effective in terms of operationalization.

Responsible Gambling

Responsible gambling (RG) pertains to the idea of protecting users of gambling and the population of any given society in general from the range of harms or related problems they may encounter through the operations of gambling industry in their proximity. It targets both the harms that may affect the gambler and their families, communities, and societies in personal level (e.g. money overspending, health, work, social problems, potential addiction), but also the societal integrity and the fairness of the operations (e.g. provision of integral gambling venues, with no cheating of any sort; preventing money laundering through gambling activities, etc.).



Historically, the Reno Model was the first strategic attempt to promote the idea of RG and it is based on two fundamental principles. First, it accepts that it is a person's choice to gamble or not and second, it points out that for a person to choose to gamble, they have to be adequately informed before (Blaszczynski et al., 2004 r). Thus, the Reno model discusses first the personal responsibility of the person, but it also stresses the responsibility of other entities to fully inform the consumers of the potential harm: industry operators, health and welfare service providers, organized community groups, and governments (Ladouceur et al., 2017 r).

RG strategies include (Ladouceur et al., 2017):

Self-exclusion programs: such programs allow gamblers to give the authority to gambling venues to deny them access to gambling facilities, remove them from the venue if they trespass, give them a fine or other sort of penalty. The length of the exclusion can range from 6 months to several years, or even forever.

Behavioural tracking of play patterns: such programs follow gamblers and methodically compare their patterns of gambling to determine behavioral patterns of people who continue gambling or seize their activity, and the characteristics of their gambling. The results of such tracking can inform stakeholders and prevention and harm reduction policies.

Loss and deposit limit setting (for players and corporates): the idea for this practice is to allow the gambler to set a limit to their gambling before the activity commences and before they have experienced any emotional fluctuation due to their gambling, losing or winning. This way, a person is



forced to stop at a certain point. This limit can be set for a certain time frame from a day to several months.

Warning messages or restricted game design: Some gambling games are designed to facilitate responsible gambling. One technique is the appearing of messages (in text or in graphics) that warn of the harms of gambling in the periphery or in the middle of electronic gambling machines and guide users to be mindful of their gambling characteristics (e.g., spending, time, emotional engagement, etc.). Other techniques of RG on the design in the display of a clock, the cash available, or the time restriction.

Training employees of gambling facilities to intervene with problematic gamblers: some venues train their employees to recognize patterns of problematic gambling, while other venues might have specified employees, whose purpose is to approach people and discuss what they observe problematic (the later has been found to raise concerns of privacy, embarrassment or apprehension).

Gambling education and information: such as awareness campaigns, booklets, any sort of media that informs the public in general, or specific target population of the harm of gambling.

Onsite or offsite counseling centers: some casinos might offer a booth, or office where a gambler can discuss with a counsellor before or right after gambling. Otherwise, gambling bet houses might be responsible to fund an offsite counseling center to welcome any person who wishes to receive counseling or therapy for themselves or a family/friend, while protecting their confidentiality.



Primary, secondary and tertiary prevention efforts: such as the present program

Responsibility of Operators

When we talk about the responsibility of operators, we are referring to the ethical, legal, and moral obligations that individuals or organizations have when they are involved in a particular industry, service, or activity. These responsibilities can encompass a wide range of duties and obligations, including aspects like, Compliance with Regulations and Laws, Ensuring Safety and Security, Protecting Consumer Interests, Environmental and Social Responsibility, Financial Responsibility or Ethical Marketing and Advertising.

Overall, the responsibility of operators is about conducting business or providing services in a way that upholds ethical standards, complies with legal requirements, and prioritizes the well-being and interests of all parties involved. It is a fundamental aspect of maintaining trust and credibility in any industry or sector.

Social media advertising and gambling

Social media advertising is increasing at an unpredictable and fast speed, especially since they're cheaper to launch and create a new type of interactive relationship between content and the user.



Overall, social media users not only receive the content, but they also turn into "content creators and distributors, by inventing, sharing, commenting or liking posts" (Rossi and Nairn, 2022).

This is emphasized by the algorithms utilized by social media platforms, which result in targeted and continued exposure after a user shows interest in a certain theme.

The gambling industry has been adapting to this reality and taking advantage of it, by reinforcing digital advertising and, consequently, social media advertising as well, lacking overall social responsibility on their messages.

This results in young people's higher exposure, which normalizes gambling and leads to an increasingly positive attitude towards it.

Since gambling advertising relies on simplification of messages and actively avoids references to its potential consequences, in order to engage users, young people start creating an erroneous idea of gambling.

Plus, young people are a demographic and social group with higher incidence of intense urges, emotionally driven and impulsive behaviour and lower ability to resist, which is used against them by the gambling industry. Besides, gambling also tends to rely on concepts such as probability, which aren't clear to young people until a certain age, making it difficult for them to grasp the implications of such behaviour.

With that, it's also important to mention that young people are still in their developmental stages and are looking for meaning, usually found in new ideas and activities which seem engaging to them. Gambling advertisers know this and make use of relatable feelings or experiences for young



people, while also not clarifying their commercial nature and/or original intent.

Overall, gambling regulations are not keeping up with this industry's developments and children may be the ones most exposed to their harm. As such, it's important to create a path which contradicts this through a deep work of sensitization, awareness and regulation.

3| THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF GAMBLING HARMS

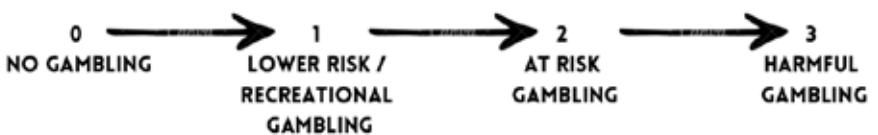
While people *may* use gambling activities recreationally and with control over their spending, many gamblers and their families and communities alike, will face negative consequences / a series of harms, with the more severe being gambling disorder, previously called gambling addiction, a psychological disorder, very frequently associated with physical, mental and social impacts (Gambling Commission, 2020 r; APA, 2013 r)

Recreation - Harm - Addiction / Gambling Disorder

Normally, people who reach the point of addiction (the most adverse of the harms of gambling) eventually become aware of that. However, many other harms go unnoticed or get repeatedly denied. Adolescents (Scottish Gambling Education Hub, 2022) and young adults (Boak et al., 2018, Calado et al., 2017) are more likely to experience gambling harms than older adults. Younger people are in general more vulnerable to adopting dangerous or reckless habits (Berti & Voller, 2007 r). Additionally, the online accessibility of gambling activities eases the exposure of youth to gambling commercials and enables online participation of youth in gambling activities irrespective of the age limit of gambling within the respective country (Calado et al., 2017). For example, a study found out that internet gamblers are more likely to be younger gamblers (Miller, 2017). Thus, in this preventive program - Gambling Free Feed- we aim to raise awareness on the harms of

gambling among younger individuals, adopting a Gambling Harms Perspective as our approach to preventing the issue. But, before we proceed with the harms of gambling, we will proceed to describe this behavior and how it evolves from recreation to a habit of problematic nature.

Gambling behaviour as a continuum



People's engagement with gambling is compared to a continuum with increasingly more engagement in terms of time invested, financial risk-taking and consequences in daily life. This classification is based on the model proposed by George and Chima (2014)

Point 0: NO GAMBLING - NON-GAMBLER

Every person of any age who has never gambled in their life falls under this category.

Point 1: RECREATIONAL/LOWER RISK GAMBLING

Every person who has gambled at least once in their life and does it only for recreational purposes and not with the purpose (only with the wish) of winning falls under this category. People who engage in recreational gambling are characterized by the following attributes:

They gamble occasionally, not in a structured manner, or if repeated is a minimal amount (e.g., at the birthday party of a friend they visit the



casino, bet 10 euros each at the slot machine and eat the free food; every few weeks they place a lotto bet for a minor amount of money).

They gamble for fun (e.g., for a Saturday night instead of going for bowling, they play a card game at a cafeteria and the loser treats the refreshment for the winner)

They wish to win, but they know that normally, they will lose (e.g., they will think I have covered all my financial obligations and I have 30 euros to spend on my entertainment this week. I will spend it on sports betting for my favorite team in the Euro/World Cup. If my team wins, wow I have some more money! If they lose, it was money to be spent elsewhere, anyway).

They set a limit to how much money they will bet and how long they will engage in gambling activities (e.g., they plan: I will go to the casino and bet 20 euros at game X. If I lose it, it's the money to be spent for the night. If I win, I will keep betting the wins and leave in one hour having lost no more than my initial 20 euros, or having won however much I can win in that one hour and no more).

They know when to stop and leave - as described above a lower risk gambler sets the time and money boundaries, realizes when they start to enjoy it too much or inappropriately and stop when the behavior has crossed their limit (e.g. they prepare themselves: if I realize that I start to fall into the trap of beginning to believe that I will win, I have to stop and remind myself of the fallacy).

The majority of people fall into this category of lower risk gambling (Scottish Gambling Education Hub, 2022). However, people's position on the continuum is dynamic and changes as people's attitude and excitement or investment towards gambling shifts. We cannot expect to never go into a higher risk category. Additionally, this is a *lower risk* category and not a *low risk* or a *no risk* category. Many harms may occur by engagement in lower risk gambling for recreational purposes. Thus, gambling should always be approached with caution and with the following rules:



If you decide to gamble, do so only for fun and interchange among different entertainment activities - gambling should not be your one and only hobby

Do not have a repeated pattern of gambling, no matter how infrequently, such as, I gamble twice a year, or every time my team wins. When it becomes a repeated activity, you may find more and more reasons to gamble more often.

Cover all your financial obligations first, then decide how much of your for-entertainment-purposes money will be for gambling and then gamble only that amount.

Know that you will lose that amount of money. Do not use any gambling activity as an investment. If it happens that you win, let it be a positive surprise that you know it won't repeat itself.

Set a limit on how long your gambling activity will last and do not exceed that time limit.

Be careful and observant to your attitude towards gambling and the characteristics of your engagement. If you realize that you get a bit too excited, you do not follow the rules above, or if you realized you meet the characteristics of a higher risk gambler, seize the activity and walk away having lost only that amount of money and no more.

Point 2: AT RISK GAMBLING

People who fall under the category of at risk, or higher risk gambling exhibit the following characteristics:

They experience guilt when they gamble, most frequently because they have lost a big amount of money, less frequently because they have faced different consequences (spent too long gambling, losing important appointments over gambling, etc.)

They try to make up for the money they have lost by gambling more - chasing losses.

They bet a bigger amount than the one they can afford to lose.



At the point of at-risk gambling, people have not yet lost control over this activity, but they have pushed their limits, or have gone beyond what they intended. More problems are experienced in daily life by this engagement, compared to lower risk gambling (Raybould et al., 2021 r). This may then escalate into harmful gambling.

Point 3: PATHOLOGICAL/HARMFUL GAMBLING

People who have reached the point of harmful or pathological gambling exhibit the following characteristics:

They struggle to control their engagement in gambling - periodically, or permanently (betting more money, spending longer time within the activity or related activities, thinking excessively of it)

They expect to win/ fall into fallacies.

They keep betting or leave the betting arrangement and return so they make up for the previously lost amount of money.

They gamble so as they earn money to cover their financial obligations or make up for financial or other problems (Scottish Gambling Education Hub, 2022)

They usually gamble so they earn more money to continue gambling (Potenza, Kosten & Rounsaville, 2001 r)

They may borrow money, lie/trick people into giving them money, or steal money to gamble (The Behavioural Insights Team for GambleAware, 2018 r)

When a person reaches the pathological gambling point, they lose control of their engagement and experience negative consequences in many aspects of their life (self, family, relationships, work, mental health) (Raybould et al., 2021 r). Frequently, people at this stage meet the criteria for a diagnosis of gambling disorder.

Gambling Disorder

Gambling is a process which excites people's mentally and physically, following the same mechanism as stimulant substances - causes stimulation to the central nervous system, through the process of gambling, rather than the insertion of a chemical into the blood flow. As the same mechanism is involved, people who continue gambling reach the point of addiction, or gambling disorder (APA, 2013 r).

Licensed mental health professionals can diagnose a person with gambling disorder, if the people exhibit a constellation of gambling harms and related behaviours for a certain period of time, as described below (APA, 2013, pg. 585 & 586):

Persistent and recurrent problematic gambling behavior leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as indicated by the individual exhibiting four (or more) of the following in a 12-month period:

1. Needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement.
2. Is restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop gambling.
3. Has made repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop gambling.
4. Is often preoccupied with gambling (e.g., having persistent thoughts of reliving past gambling experiences, handicapping or planning the next venture, thinking of ways to get money with which to gamble).
5. Often gambles when feeling distressed (e.g., helpless, guilty, anxious, depressed).



6. After losing money gambling, often returns this day to get even ("chasing" one's losses).
7. Lies to conceal the extent of involvement with gambling.
8. Has jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of gambling.
9. Relies on others to provide money to relieve desperate financial situations caused by gambling.
10. The gambling behavior is not better explained by a manic episode.

Specifications:

- Episodic: Meeting diagnostic criteria at more than one time point, with symptoms subsiding between periods of gambling disorder for at least several months.
- Persistent: Experiencing continuous symptoms, to meet diagnostic criteria for multiple years.
- In early remission: After full criteria for gambling disorder were previously met, none of the criteria for gambling disorder have been met for at least 3 months but for less than 12 months.

In sustained remission: After full criteria for gambling disorder were previously met, none of the criteria for gambling disorder have been met during a period of 12 months or longer.

- Severity: Mild: 4-5 criteria met. Moderate: 6-7 criteria met. Severe: 8-9 criteria met.

Formation of gambling disorder or addiction



Gambling involves the risk of losing money, paired with the possibility of "earning big" if luck is on your side. It is a risky and exciting activity. When people engage in gambling, we put ourselves through the anticipation of a big reward. This experience affects our body functions, specifically the Central Nervous System (CNS - the brain and the spinal cord) and in repeated activity it results to disordered functioning of it, as described below.

Reward system

The reward system of the mammal brain is a circuit of hormonal activity, which makes us feel good or bad according to the experience we have in our daily endeavors (Miller & Carroll, 2006). If we engage in an activity and we have a positive reward (internal or external), there is dopamine release, which translates to the emotions of joy, happiness, excitement, or euphoria, according to the gratitude of our reward. The person who experiences this tends to repeat the action that brought about the positive result. On the contrary, if one of our activities causes some form of pain or dysphoria, we tend to avoid those actions. Examples of behaviours that trigger dopamine release are eating, exercising, having intercourse, any social activities that make other people accept us (being kind, offering help), any activities that show recognition (e.g., being the best student, earning a reward, receiving your salary etc.). Behaviours that lower dopamine are any actions that cause us pain (touching a hot surface, eating excessively), exclusion from a community (being rude or violent to people), and other painful social or emotional situation (being embarrassed or abused in some way) and so on. The reward system is used in teaching methods when a person (human or of other species) is



rewarded with any sort of treatment after a positive action or is punished after a bad deed.

Formation of habit

Gambling, as described above, excites the reward system through the release of an excessive amount of dopamine and people tend to repeat it, to experience the same effect. After the passage of sometime of the engagement in the activity, the dopamine levels of the brain return to their normal balanced state and the person goes about with their day. No harm caused so far. However, with repeated exposure to the gambling activity and the analogous release of dopamine, the brain eventually learns to function on higher levels of dopamine and the amount of dopamine released by healthy and adaptive daily activities is not enough for the brain to function properly - higher amount is needed. At that point we understand that the brain has formed a habit to function on higher levels of dopamine that are released by the activity of gambling and the receptors of the hormone are suppressed and not reacting to lower, balanced level of the hormone. After this point a person can seize their gambling activity and recover, but if they continue, they might have different reactions and the experience of withdrawal (Miller & Carroll, 2006 & Scottish Gambling Education Hub, 2022).

Withdrawal

Tolerance

When a person has formed the habit of functioning on higher levels of dopamine released through gambling, we observe what we describe as

tolerance. Continuing with gambling (similar to the use of psychotropic substances), the same amount of gambling is not enough to give the same release of dopamine. The person needs to bet a bigger amount, gamble more often, or take higher risks (at the bet, or environmentally) to reach the same level of excitement. This is called tolerance. Along with the tolerance people may start to experience losing of money, engage in unethical or illegal means to obtain money to gamble and suffer the consequent relationship and social friction, along with negative emotions of guilt, sadness, feeling of lack of control and the need to chase the losses (Miller & Carroll, 2006 & Scottish Gambling Education Hub, 2022).

Stress and craving

Tolerance and the associated negative emotions make the dopamine release and the associated euphoria less prominent. Rather, the person experiences an activation of the stress reaction on the CNS, which is associated with emotions and sensations of irritability, restlessness, loss of motivation, disappointment, guilt, sadness/ hopelessness, loss of control, anxiety and possible panic symptoms. To release this negative emotionality the person experiences the urge to gamble again, called craving. Motivators for the craving vary. People need to feel some sort of excitement, to release the stress, to have some joy, to make up for the lost amount of money, to return money to family or people they owe, etc. Craving is an intense, almost irresistible urge to engage in the activity, so as to relieve this intense emotional state, the state of *withdrawal* (Miller & Carroll, 2006 & Scottish Gambling Education Hub, 2022).



Preoccupation/ Anticipation

As the person experiences withdrawal symptoms, along with continuous stress and inability to take pleasure from other activities, they may become preoccupied with gambling and the majority of their time is spent to gamble or obtain means to gamble (Scottish Gambling Education Hub, 2022, 2022).

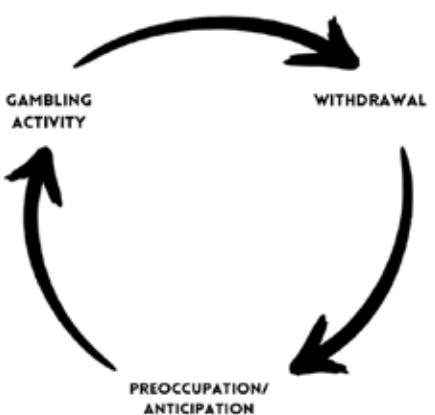
Inhibition system

By this time, the majority of people with gambling disorder have tried to stop this activity, or somehow control it, but may do not succeed. One reason, besides the withdrawal symptoms, is the impairment of a second brain circuit, the inhibition system, which is responsible for impulse control (Miller & Carroll, 2006). The inhibition system is a series of executive functions processes, which lead to the person effectively stopping an urge (or impulse) from becoming a behavior. One example of inhibition control is the following: Imagine returning home at 2am after a night out and craving a piece of your favorite cake. Do you eat it or not? What do you think about making your decision? The inhibition system at that point will run a number of executive processes: scaling pros and cons, reminding of a person's health or weight goal, think of how it will affect one's stomach right before bed, remember the taste of it and decide whether to experience that taste right now, or tomorrow and so on. This is a healthy and very quick process and whether you end up eating the cake or not is irrelevant at this point. However, when it comes to gambling (or any other form of addiction), this is more important. Through brain imaging research we know that an addicted person's brain cannot carry that activity of the inhibition system, as the area of the brain involved (prefrontal cortex) is not activated appropriately. Thus, the process of

decision making does not take place appropriately and the person has much bigger trouble resisting the urge to gamble again.

Additionally, any forms of triggers reminding of gambling (advertisement, gambling paraphernalia, walking past a place one used to gamble, seeing a gambling partner) activates the habit seeking system and slows down the inhibition system, thus making it much for difficult for people to resist the activity, even after having stopped their engagement for a period of time (Miller & Carroll, 2006; Scottish Gambling Education Hub, 2022).

The experience of the person who has developed gambling disorder has been schematically described as the gambling disorder cycle (Scottish Gambling Education Hub, 2022, 2022). Starting by gambling activity, leading to withdrawal, when one tries to control their actions, which leads to preoccupation/anticipation of gambling and returns the person back to gambling, withdrawing and so on.





4 | GAMBLING HARMS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

Adolescents and younger adults who gamble, have been found to have a higher probability of experiencing gambling related harms, compared to older adults (Scottish Gambling Education Hub, 2022), with a quarter of the people aged 11 through 26, who had gambled reporting some impact in their life from that activity (Fast Forward, Young Scot, & The ALLIANCE, 2022 r). Younger people also are more vulnerable to adopting harmful habits (Berti & Voller, 2007 r) and usually disordered or harmful gambling starts at the time of early adulthood (around 20) and escalates later in life (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2014 4). Gambling related harms can be present in many areas of a young person's life.

Finances:

Financial shortages (Afifi et al., 2010 r)

Prioritizing spending money on gambling rather than social activities, or purchases

Relationships:



Limited time allocated to family; peers' gatherings due to gambling
Increased conflict in relationships,
Increased friction in family (Afifi et al., 2010; Hardoon & Derevensky, 2002 r)

Social life:

Poor/limited social engagement (either because of lack of money, or because of lack of time, both of which have been used for gambling) (Afifi et al., 2010)

Legal struggles (Afifi et al., 2010):

Common problems with the law directly (engaging in illegal gambling, underaged

gambling), or related (financial struggles, stealing, scamming, etc.)

Work/School:

Delays in arriving at work or school.

Absence

Poor academic performance (Dowling et al. ,2016; Hardoon & Derevensky, 2002)

Poor work performance and overall functionality (Afifi et al., 2010)

Unemployment (Afifi et al., 2010)

Physical health (Afifi et al., 2010):

Problems caused by poor sleep hygiene, poor diet while gambling, using of substances, hours of limited movement and so on

Poor self - hygiene (Triantafillou, 2012)

Physical health problems also occur in members of the family of the person who gambles (Afifi et al., 2010)

Mental health (Afifi et al., 2010; Wardle & McManus, 2021):

Distress (Wardle & McManus, 2021)

Shame about the gambling activities (Wardle & McManus, 2021)



Sleep deprivation and poor sleep hygiene due to gambling activity
General anxiety (Wardle & McManus, 2021)
Depression (Wardle & McManus, 2021; Hardoon & Derevensky, 2002)
Suicidal ideation or attempts associated with harmful gambling
Use of substances (tobacco, alcohol, illicit drugs)
Problems occur also in the family member of the gambler (Afifi et al. 2010)
Defiant or antisocial behaviours (Hardoon & Derevensky, 2002)
Negative impact on executive functioning and cognitive abilities (affecting thinking, memory difficulties, poor concentration, logic, impacted problem solving skills)
Addiction to gambling

Factors which influence gambling behavior among young people

In most societies, young people are exposed to gambling content and become less and more inclined to gamble themselves. The following are factors which influence young people's involvement in gambling. For classification purposes, we distinguish these factors into motivators (what leads the person to want to gamble) and facilitators (what makes it easier for the person to gamble, even if they don't have any special interest). We describe findings from research:

Motivators:

- *Need for entertainment* (Fisher, 2003 r; Walker, 1992 r): gambling is a way to have fun on many levels - maybe you play games with friends so you



engage in social activities; in skills games you exercise your knowledge and skills; certain attributes of certain facilities are exciting (e.g. casinos normally offer free drinks and food).

- *Need for excitement and novelty*: winning, or near missing are factors of risk taking that excite the brain and cover for the need of novelty. Tempting music, flashing light, or other mechanisms of certain activities also excite the brain's physiology.
- *Need for competition* (Fisher, 2003; Cotte, 1997): a valid human need, competition can be expressed in adaptable ways, e.g., sports, studying or working towards an award, running for an office. However, for people lacking these opportunities otherwise, gambling may serve as a risky outlet, which may give some fulfilment initially, but it is destructive long-term.
- *Testing one's skills* (Gambling Commission, 2022): while luck is always a big element of the outcome of any gambling event, certain games require a skillset (betting on athletic events, poker, etc.). In those games, the need to test one's skills and the belief in one's skills will motivate people to gamble more often.
- *Escape from reality* (Fisher, 2003; Papadimas, 2003; Walker, 1992): gambling can get you involved in it, so as it can distract you from negative thoughts, problems, or longer standing psychological difficulties (e.g., a past trauma).
- *Psychosocial difficulties* (Anagnostopoulos, et al., 2014): similarly, people with such mental health struggles might gravitate towards gambling.
- *Social engagement* (Fisher, 2003; Aasved, 2003; Walker, 1992): group games, or competitive games might serve as a way to engage with others. People with limited social interactions, or impaired social skills are more vulnerable to exercise gambling as a way to make friends, have



company, or receive admiration for their skills; in some cases, it has been described as a way to “buy friends, love, and acceptance” (Salpistis, 2013)

- *Feeling of importance* (Cotte, 1997): when one wins, it is a way to prove they important, or powerful to others, or that they have the ability to control their fate (Cotte, 1997)

Facilitators:

- *Awareness*: the mere knowledge of gambling venues and variety of games and brands can influence people towards gambling (Beynon et al., 2021 r)
- *Acceptability* (Evans & Cross, 2021 r): if gambling is accepted and considered a normative behaviour in one’s society or community, it is more likely one will engage in it. For instance, people whose religion forbids such engagement are less vulnerable to engaging in it or experiencing harms from gambling.
- Belief that it is *a way to earn money* (Fisher, 2003; Papadimas, 2003): this is a common fallacy around gambling. While most people know that it is unlikely to win, many still support the belief that they will win, a belief that is reinforced by storytelling of people who have won (e.g., movies, books, etc.).
- *Other false information and belief of fallacies*: lack of awareness of the dangers of gambling (Papadimas, 2003), along with thinking that you may control an event of chance and possibilities; lack of knowledge of the laws of possibility and probability; beliefs that it is a way to relax and other fallacies make young people more prone to gamble beyond control.

- *Gender* (Gay, Grill & Corboy, 2016 r): male young and older people are more vulnerable to gambling
- *Age* (Gambling Commission, 2019 r): older people are more likely to have
- *Peer's involvement in gambling*: Young people who perceived their peers as gambling more often, would exhibit higher levels of problematic gambling (Gay, Grill & Corboy, 2016 r) and any sort of other gambling related harms (Dowling et al., 2016 r). That could function as a way of getting the approval of their friends, or it could demonstrate as a fear of missing out on an activity so many people other seemingly enjoy.
- *Parental involvement in gambling*: Parental engagement with gambling and the level of the perception of such, makes adolescents more likely to exhibit higher problematic gambling (Gay, Grill & Corboy, 2016 r).
- *Fear of regret or feeling lucky*: As many gambling games are socially acceptable and seemingly many people engage in those, it is easy to experience the consideration of 'being lucky' at a particular time point and worry that one might miss out if they fail to follow that inspiration.
- *Ease of access* (Desai et al., 2005; Evans & Cross, 2021): Availability of gambling facilities might encourage people to 'just try it out.' Online availability makes it even easier and faster for people.
- *Advertisement* (MacGregor et al. ,2020 r): Happy people have changed their life after winning the jackpot. The more often you see that, the higher the possibility to gamble. No advertisement will ever show the tens or hundreds of thousands of people who never win the jackpot.

Theoretical categorization of motivators

Motivational Model

Binde (2013) has suggested a theoretical categorization of a **motivational model** for gambling among -primarily- recreational gamblers. He suggests five dimensions of motivation:

1. *Jackpot*: the person decides to gamble, with the wish of winning a great amount of money which will transform their lives for the better. They might gamble only when there is a jackpot amount, but not that frequently.
2. *Social rewards*: as described above, gambling allows people to connect with others, thus bringing the feeling of companionship, covering feelings of loneliness. Otherwise, people might receive recognition by their ability on skills games, or the opportunity to show off their wealth (what they can bet, or what they earn), and so on
3. *Intellectual challenge*: pertains mostly to skills games, where you are challenged especially by other skillful players.
4. *Mood change induced by playing* everything that gambling offers to cover negative emotionality
5. *Chance of winning*: it is the fundamental and most common motivator. It differs from jackpot in that it does not aim for the same huge amount – any win is a motivator.

Gambling Motivation Scale (GMS) & Modified Gambling Motivation Scale (MGMS)

Chantal and colleagues (1994) suggested seven motivations of gambling, based on the self-determination theory. These are the following:

1. Learning the game



2. Feeling competent
3. Experiencing excitement
4. Socializing
5. Feeling important
6. Win money
7. Continuing gambling aimlessly

These seven motivators pertain mostly to gamblers, deeper involved into their engagement, although some motivators might pertain to recreational gamblers as well.

Shinaprayoon and colleagues (2018) have restudied the GMS and through novel statistical analyses have suggested a six-factor model:

1. Experiencing intellectual challenge (combined motivations to learn and to feel competent)
2. Experience excitement
3. Socializing
4. Feeling important
5. Winning money
6. Continuing gambling aimlessly

Intervention models & theories

Interventions to prevent gambling harms among young people are classified in three levels: individual, community, society. We follow these three main levels of intervention. The individual level of frameworks includes interventions targeting specifically on occasional/recreational youth gamblers and youth who are at risk at personal levels. The



community level frameworks include interventions focusing on broader level of youth who are at risk (e.g., colleague students) and instead of working individually with youth, community level interventions adopt their goals at the group level. The society level of frameworks encompasses harm prevention interventions/policies endorsed at the societal level. Examples are presented below.

Individual Level Interventions	Community Level Interventions	Society Level Interventions
Personalized Normative Feedback Intervention (PNFI)	Psychoeducational Prevention Programs/Comprehensive Psychoeducational and Skills Training Prevention Programs	Demand Reduction Strategies
Web-based Intervention for Youth	Community-based Awareness Campaigns	Supply Reduction Strategies
Implementation Intentions	Inoculation Theory	Age Restriction Strategies

Individual Level Interventions

Personalized Normative Feedback Intervention (PNFI): The (PNFI) is theoretically based on the Social Norms approach. In simple words, the social norms approach supports that youth carry misperceptions of their



peers' behaviors. Specifically, they tend to overestimate harmful behaviors (e.g., smoking is cool) or underestimate beneficial ones (e.g., studying is lame) (Deutsch & Gerard, 1993). The theory supports that the more misperceptions' youngsters hold, the more likely they are to engage in maladaptive behaviors, such as substance use and to avoid adaptive ones, such as healthy eating. As a result of this theory, it is suggested that by correcting such misperceptions among youth (with the provision of accurate information regarding peers' behaviors) young people will engage in more adaptive activities and avoid the negative ones.

PNFI attempts to intervene in correcting such normative misperceptions by making the discrepancy between the person's perception and reality overtly visible. By doing so it allows people to self-evaluate their behavior (Celio & Lisman, 2014). It is done through three simple steps.

Step 1: Questionnaires are given to people that assess their gambling behavior (e.g., frequency) and their perceptions of their peers' gambling.

Step 2: Participants are presented with personalized feedback that contrasts: a. his/her gambling behavior; b. his/her perception of how much peers gamble; c. how much peers gamble in reality.

Step 3: Participants are provided with feedback in text and in graphical forms that illustrates their own gambling behavior and compares the discrepancy between their perception of peers' gambling and peers' actual gambling.

Throughout PNFI intervention, youth are expected to raise their awareness regarding their own gambling behaviour and correct



misperceptions by detecting the real patterns about peers' gambling behaviour. PNFI has proven beneficial in decreasing alcohol consumption among college students (Dimeff et al., 1999) and has promising results regarding gambling (Marchica & Derevensky, 2016; Neighbors et al., 2015). A warning should be made in terms of PNFI having been developed to tackle alcohol consumption, which is a substance use. Gambling is a behaviour and thus the same interventions might not have the same results.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Low cost: few resources are required to apply	Personalized feedback should be reminded: not always the case with online methods
Time efficient: immediate feedback to the person	Hard to check long-term effectiveness: attrition

Web-based Intervention for Youth: Young people have higher rates of at-risk gambling. The framework on which web-based interventions are built suggests that the reason for this higher rate is linked with the limitations on deliberate decision making (an executive function) among young people (Canale et al., 2016). The brain part responsible for executive functioning is not fully developed until early to mid 20s, thus young people have such limitations. This leads youth to underestimate risks associated with gambling (Luciana, 2013). Since they underestimate the potential risks related to gambling, they fail to seek any information regarding their gambling activities, especially from reliable and scientific sources. Additionally, even young people who are aware of the risky



nature of gambling might fail to seek support, due to concerns over confidentiality, stigma, and judgement (Sieglff, 2017).

Web-based approaches have a series of advantages against the above concerns. First, anonymity immediately reduces fear of judgement and stigmatization. Second, non-judgmental delivery of information enables youth to ask for future feedback associated with gambling behaviors (Chiauzzi et al., 2005; Griffiths & Cooper, 2003). Third, use of graphics appeal to youth more and facilitates stronger emotional response than the mere texts used in educational settings (Canale et al., 2016). Therefore, higher levels of awareness and harm prevention are expected to be evident through the implementation of web-based intervention. Indeed, there is a wide range of research displaying the effectiveness of web-based intervention in reducing high-risk behaviors (e.g., alcohol use). Specifically, a study showed that the implementation of web-based intervention led to decrease in at risk gambling behavior among high-school students (Canale et al., 2016).

Step 1. Online evaluation of youth's gambling behavior at three main areas: 1. frequency of gambling; 2. expenditure related to gambling; 3. feelings associated with gambling through questionnaires.

Step 2. Provision of online feedback based on the responses. Feedback includes: 1. summary of scores and 2. assignment to one of three categories (i.e., non-problematic gambling, at risk gambling, and problem gambling)

Step 3. Presentation of a list of consequences of gambling for health and quality of life



Step 4. Provision of tips for lowering risks in the form of an online training with QnA. For example, the user is asked “do you know the difference between luck-based and skill-based games” and then an answer appears.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Inexpensive</p> <p>Easy implementation and provision of feedback</p> <p>Accessible in various settings (home, school, etc.) and to all people with internet access</p>	<p>Categorization no problem, at risk, dangerous might be misunderstood and anxiety provoking as a label and in the absence of a professional who can clarify questions.</p>

Implementation intentions: Implementation intentions is a framework based on health psychology. It has emerged as a result of the gap between intention and behaviour. Although people honestly intend to make a change (in our case that change is to stop, or reduce gambling), often they fail to take the appropriate action, or they relapse back to their initial behaviour (Gollwitzer, P. M. 1993). That happens because setting a goal although necessary, is not a sufficient condition for behavioural change, a goal-directed plan is also necessary. Implementation intentions are such goal-directed plans. It is important to highlight that this framework is particularly designed for youth who wish to limit their gambling behaviour (Gollwitzer, P. M. 1993).

Implementation intentions are formed by integrating what, when, where, and how the behaviour in reference will be performed. Through the

process of forming implementation intentions, three important aspects need to be considered. First, people recognize situations and cues that trigger unwanted behaviour. For example, feelings of anger might be a cue triggering the young person to gamble. Second, conditional responses to situations are formed. For example, a person examines what they will do when they get angry (e.g., if I am feeling angry, I will be going out for a walk instead of gambling). Third, behavioural responses are chosen based on the conditional plan. For example, walking is the behavioural response to the above scenario (see the next table for examples):

Situation/Cues	If/Then Plan	Appropriate Behaviour
Anger	If I am feeling angry, I will go out for a walk instead of gambling.	Walking
Friend	If my friend asks me to gamble, I will indicate my intention to limit my gambling and politely say no.	Polite Refusal

Boredom	If I will boredom, I will watch Netflix instead of gambling.	Watching Netflix
Location	If my route is along with the casino, I will find alternative routes to go the place I want.	Alternative Route

This plan can be created either by the young person who wishes to limit their gambling activities or by the guidance of a health professional.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Concrete predetermined plans – youngsters know what to do when the craving moment comes, instead of trying to figure it out then Recognition of cues and triggers – promotion of self-understanding	Ineffective to those not recognizing gambling as problematic or harmful

Community Level Interventions

Psychoeducational Prevention Programs/Comprehensive Psychoeducational and Skills Training Prevention Programs

Psychoeducational Prevention approaches aim is to increase knowledge on gambling and at-risk gambling, functioning on the idea that the lack of knowledge about gambling is what leads to pathological gambling (Blaszczynski & Nower, 2022). As a result, it is contemplated that



if people correct maladaptive gambling-related cognitions through education, their likelihood of developing pathological gambling will be lessened to a greater extent.

Psychoeducational prevention programs include the following topics among others: definition of gambling, gambling fallacies, game odds and probabilities, information on problematic gambling, and negative consequences associated with problematic gambling. For example, one gambling related fallacy is the belief that individuals can control the outcomes of a bet, if they follow certain rituals or routines. If a young person does not know this, they might carry the same false belief and lean towards gambling more than if they believed that the outcome is purely based on luck. Such fallacies are corrected or pointed out through psychoeducational programs, promoting responsible gambling, or abstinence.

The comprehensive psychoeducational_and skills training prevention programs are in their basis the same as the above programs with an addition of a socioemotional skills training component. The socioemotional skills training involves activities that increase self-esteem, interpersonal skills, healthy coping skills, problem-solving abilities, decision making processes, and peer-pressure refusal skills.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Can reach a wide audience	Lack of efficacy studies.
Easily performed in schools, thus everyone gets to hear the message even if they don't wish to engage much	Needs a lot of tailoring to the audience for the message to be effectively delivered



Can increase bystander and peer support	
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Community-based awareness campaigns: Community-based awareness campaigns are education-based approaches that aim to raise awareness about gambling harms not only among youth, but also among their families and members of the community. The approach promotes a more integrative approach to yield comprehensive gambling harm prevention. The underlying assumption behind this approach is similar to psychoeducational prevention approaches.

The difference lies in methodology, as a broader age and group audience is reached and through a bigger variety of means (e.g., posters, digital channels, social media pages and so on). Messages shared through community-based awareness campaigns pertain information on gambling harms, statistics and so on. They also illustrate how online games, popular among youth, mimic gambling (e.g., loot boxes) and they offer guidance how parents or professional groups can approach and discuss with young people regarding their involvement in gambling, along with giving references to prevention and therapy centers.

In terms of implementation of community-based campaigns, there are several principles that need to be applied to design the content of such awareness programs (Blaszczynski & Gainsbury):

1. Clear objectives from the beginning, clear outcomes and metrics in short- and long- term application of the project.
2. Content derived from reliable, scientific research.



- 3. Psychological, environmental, and social determinants of gambling harm prevention arranged according to the given community
- 4. Content such as to enable youth to question their standing on gambling continuum
- 5. Unbiased messages free of stigma and stereotypes
- 6. Motivational messages that inspire audience to minimize harms

Advantages	Disadvantages
Online – easily accessible	Lack of evidence on effectiveness – we cannot know how many have reduced gambling due to visiting the campaign
Wide scope of audiences – every member of the community	

The inoculation-theory: The inoculation-theory based approaches were developed in response to the awareness campaigns. According to the inoculation theory, the current awareness campaigns merely provide information about gambling-related risks and present responsible gambling to avoid these risks. The inoculation theory suggests that awareness campaigns overlook an important element: gambling advertisements (Messerlian & Derevensky, 2006).

Inoculation theory connects advertisement with the tendency to gamble. Numerous studies show that gambling advertisements create a positive image of gambling (with the use of big promises and excited winners), particularly among youth. This in turn triggers youth to further engage in gambling (Compton, J., & Pfau, M., 2005)



The theory suggests that youth need to be provided with information that counter attacks the claims of gambling advertisements and compares the process with the idea of vaccination. With vaccination we insert a small dosage of a virus in our bodies so as our immune systems fights it and creates necessary anti-bodies to be used in bigger attacks in the future. Analogously, young people are presented with gambling advertisements along with a clear rationale why it is wrong and thus, people are more prepared to counterattack future claims of false promises.

Three main steps consist of the process of the inoculation theory:

1. Youth are provided with a threat (e.g., "gambling might lead to serious financial loss")
2. Youth are exposed to a gambling advertisement (e.g., "you are going to need a bigger wallet"). The selected gambling advertisement should be one that the person is familiarized with and has clear reference of what it pertains to, so they can relate the message.
3. You are provided with refutations. For example, "the gambling industry claims that you will need a bigger wallet for your earnings. but in fact, the truth is that the probability of you winning is 1/13,983,816. You are more likely to be hit by a lightning."

The basic assumption behind this approach is that by exposing individuals to a persuasive message that was already counter-attacked by weakening its arguments, further resistance for future attacks can be developed.

Advantages	Disadvantages
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Ground on how to persuade people to avoid persuasion	IT has high efficacy results, but that applies to youth with high self-efficacy. Less confident youth might not benefit that well (Pfau et al., 1992).
Protective guard against enormous financial economy of gambling and its advertisement	Lack of evidence on the duration of the effectiveness of inoculation

Society Level Interventions

Demand Reduction Strategies: Demand Reduction Strategies aim to reduce the desire to gamble. This is achieved through preventive and warning messages and through modification of gambling features and venues. Suggested methods are the following:

- Enforcement of policies requiring casinos to use clocks and windows, so people won't lose track of time (current practice).
- Banning of offering free drinks, food, tobacco in casinos
- Banning of the presence of an ATM near betting houses
- So forth

Advantages	Disadvantages
Implementation of such strategies minimize harm	Applicable only for onsite venues, not online betting areas. Not many approaches to minimize demand of online betting

Supply reduction strategies: The supply reduction strategies aim to reduce the physical availability of gambling-related activities instead of gamblers' desire to gamble.



Examples of supply reduction strategies:

1. Reduction of the density and distribution of casino venues and booking houses
2. High taxation and increase of price for casinos/betting houses
3. Limiting opening hours of venues

Advantages	Disadvantages
Potential to minimize harm	Requires long-term consistency to work High pricing and taxation might lead to illegal venues Little application to online legal gambling

Age restriction Strategies: The age restriction strategies involve setting an age limit both for indoor gambling and also online gambling. Although age restriction strategies are country-specific and differ from one country to another, most countries have an age limit either set to 18 or 21 for gambling.

The age restriction strategies are usually practiced by verifying the age of users through their ID – checking at the entrance of casinos or bet houses. Online it is more complicated to ensure restriction of access to minors. While there is software that matches ID with face, many online gambling venues simply ask you to only click a box to verify you are above 18, which is very easy to cheat and enter.

The age verification system sounds like a promising approach as they have the potential to prevent underage gambling. However, there are serious issues that need to be considered to assure the effectiveness of age restriction strategies especially when it comes to online gambling. There



might be cases where youth might lie about their age in websites that use only age indicating approaches. Also, even with the stricter approaches, it is still open to discussion since youth can easily find older adults who can age verify on behalf of them.

5 | EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEMATIC GAMBLING ENGAGEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Early identification of problematic gambling engagement in young people is crucial for preventing the development of severe gambling related issues later in life. Problematic gambling refers to the behaviour of gambling that disrupts various aspects of an individual's life, such as their financial situation, relationships, mental health, and overall well-being. Here are some key points to consider when it comes to early identification of problematic gambling engagement in young people:

1. Awareness and Education: It's essential to raise awareness about the potential risks and negative consequences associated with gambling, especially among young people. Education programs can help young individuals understand the difference between recreational gambling and problematic gambling.
2. Warning Signs: knowing the warning signs of problematic gambling can aid in early identification. Some common indicators include an increasing preoccupation about gambling, frequent thoughts about past gambling experiences, attempting to conceal gambling activities, using gambling as a means of escape, borrowing money to gamble, and experiencing negative consequences due to gambling.



3. Screening tools: several screening tools and questionnaires are available to assess gambling behaviour and identify potential problems. For instance, the Canadian Adolescent Gambling Inventory (CAGI) (Tremblay J., Stinchfield R., Wiebe J., et al, 2010) and the South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS) (Lesieur H. R., Blume S. B., 1987) are widely used tools to assess gambling involvement and identify at risk individuals.
4. Family and Peer Observation: Family members and close friends may notice changes in behaviour, mood swings, increased secrecy, financial difficulties, or other signs indicating problematic gambling. Maintaining open lines of communication and encouraging discussions about gambling can help identify issues at an early stage.
5. Mental Health Assessment: Problematic gambling is often associated with mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, or substance abuse (Bhullar N, Simons L, Joshi K, et al., 2012). Conducting mental health assessments, either through self-reporting or with the help of professionals, can shed light on underlying issues that may contribute to or result from problematic gambling.
6. Collaboration and Intervention: Schools, parents, healthcare professionals, experts by experience and community organizations can collaborate to identify and address problematic gambling in young people. Early intervention programs, counselling services, and peer support groups can help those showing signs of gambling-related issues.



7. **Responsible Gambling Measures:** Promoting responsible gambling practices, such as setting limits on time and money spent gambling, can help mitigate the risk of developing gambling problems. Encouraging young individuals to engage in other hobbies, maintain healthy relationships, and have a balanced lifestyle can also serve as a protective factor. It's important to remember that early identification alone is not sufficient. Once problematic gambling is identified, appropriate support and intervention should be provided to young individuals to help them overcome their challenges and develop healthier behaviours.

Misconceptions towards gambling and its harms/problems (fallacies)

One aspect that deserves attention is the misconceptions or fallacies surrounding gambling and its potential harms. These misconceptions can contribute to risky gambling behaviour and hinder the recognition of problematic gambling engagement. In this response, we will explore some common misconceptions and fallacies associated with gambling.

1. Misconception: "If you have been lucky once, you will always be".

Many young people perceive gambling as purely luck-based, assuming that if they win once, they can continue to win consistently. This belief can lead to an underestimation of the risks and unpredictability of gambling outcomes, contributing to excessive gambling and potential harm.

2. Misconception: "Gambling is a quick way to make money".



Some young people may view gambling as an easy and fast way to gain wealth. This fallacy can lead to unrealistic expectations, financial losses, and a cycle of chasing losses to recoup money. The reality is that gambling is designed to favour the house, making it statistically unlikely to consistently profit.

3. Misconception: "Gambling is harmless entertainment".

Many young people consider gambling as a harmless form of entertainment, similar to playing video games or watching movies. However, excessive gambling can lead to financial difficulties, emotional distress, relationships problems and even addiction. It's important to recognize the potential risks and harms associated with gambling, especially for vulnerable populations. Most forms of gambling are designed to get you hooked and gambling is always harmful. Little gambling activity usually just doesn't show much harm. And literally everyone can become addicted, not just those with certain preconditions.

4. Misconception: "If I keep gambling, I will eventually win".

Some young people may fall into the fallacy of the "gambler's fallacy", believing that if they continue gambling, their chances of winning will increase over time. This belief disregards the random nature of gambling outcomes and can lead to persistent gambling despite mounting losses. It's essential to address these misconceptions and fallacies through educational initiatives, public awareness campaigns, and early interventions. By providing accurate information and promoting responsible gambling behaviours, we can help young people make informed decisions and reduce the risk of problematic gambling



engagement, like preventive speeches in high schools, universities, teaching them about responsible gambling practices, etc.

How to recognize signs and symptoms of youth developing problematic gambling behaviour

Recognizing signs and symptoms of youth developing problematic gambling behaviour is crucial in order to provide early intervention and support. Problematic gambling behaviour can have serious consequences on the mental, emotional, and financial well-being of young individuals. Here are some signs to look out for:

1. Increased Preoccupation with Gambling: If a young person constantly talks about gambling (at least with their friends), frequently mentions betting or casinos (as a normal way of spending time), or seems overly focused on gambling-related activities, it could be a warning sign.
2. Borrowing money or Financial Troubles: Struggling with money is a typical sign of gambling issues. Youth may start borrowing or stealing money, or frequently ask for financial help. Persistent request for money without a clear explanation of how it will be used, or unexplained financial problems without even being independent economically, may indicate a gambling issue.
3. Emotional Distress and Changes in Behaviour: Problematic gambling can lead to emotional distress. If a youth is experiencing anxiety, depression, or increased irritability related to their gambling activities, it may indicate a problem. Also, sudden mood



swings in behaviour, such as becoming secretive, moody, irritable, or distant from friends and family.

4. Decline in Academic or Work Performance: A drop in grades, frequent absences, or decreased productivity at work can be linked to gambling distractions and the time spent on gambling activities.
5. Neglecting responsibilities: If a young person starts neglecting important responsibilities, such as household chores or personal commitments, gambling could be a contributing factor.
6. Withdrawal from Social Activities: A youth with developing gambling issues may withdraw from activities they previously enjoyed spending more time gambling.
7. Chasing losses: trying to recoup losses by gambling more is a warning sign. It can lead to a vicious cycle of increasing bets and losses.
8. Hiding gambling activities: Secretive behaviour, such as hiding or lying about their whereabouts, can indicate a problem.
9. Relationship issues: Problem gambling can strain relationships with family and friends due to lies, financial troubles, or neglect.

If you notice these signs in a youth, it's essential to address the issue sensitively and supportively. Encourage open communication, express your concerns, and offer to help them seek professional assistance. Additionally, familiarize yourself with local resources, such as helplines or support groups, that specialize in dealing with gambling-related issues.

How to approach a young person who has harmful and or risk full gambling behaviour



The best way to approach a young person who presents harmful gambling behaviour is to speak in a calm, positive and non-judgemental way. It may be good to start by asking them what they think about gambling, in general, to learn/discover the degree of their consciousness of their problem. The risks and consequences of gambling behaviour are an important topic of discussion; for example, how it might affect their social and economic life. The use of questions is a good method for the person to be able to arrive to his/her own conclusions about their gambling problem. Different solutions can be presented to the person, not in a mandatory way, however. The person must make their own decisions about what to do about their gambling behaviour.

How to help a young person recognise his or her problem. (e.g., self-assessment test on gambling behaviour)

It is very important to establish affinity and trust with the person. It's also important to stimulate doubts or concerns to the individual about the pattern of gambling: offering objective information about the risk of gambling, providing feedback on the results of the evaluation (self-assessment tests on gambling behaviour), exploring advantages and disadvantages of gambling behaviour, examining discrepancies between the perception of the patient and family members.

Psychoeducation is essential for acquiring awareness about the problem and it goes beyond the mere transmission of information. It is an intervention that tries to provide a theoretical and practical framework in which the gambler can understand and deal with the disorder and its



possible consequences. The main goals of psychoeducation include promoting disease awareness and improving compliance with treatment guidelines.

It is good to help the person weigh the decisional balance: balancing the advantages and disadvantages of the gambling behaviour and the change; promoting intrinsic motivation; examining personal values in relation to a change.

Early intervention and referral in case of more serious gambling behaviour: What help is available in each country?

Early identification and intervention are crucial when it comes to addressing problematic gambling engagement in young people. By identifying the signs of gambling related issues early on, appropriate support and referral can be provided to prevent the problem from escalating further. Here are some key steps for early intervention and referral in case of more serious gambling behaviour in young people:

1. Awareness and Education: schools, parents and community organizations should focus on educating young people about the potential risks and consequences of gambling, without forgetting to educate themselves first. They should be made aware of how gambling can become problematic and how to recognize the signs of excessive gambling behaviour.
2. Screening and Assessment: Professionals in healthcare, schools, or youth organizations should be trained to identify potential gambling problems through screening and assessment tools. These



tools can help identify individuals at risk or already experiencing gambling-related issues.

3. Open Communication and Supportive Environment: Creating an environment where young people feel comfortable discussing their concerns about gambling is vital. Encourage open communication with parents, teachers, counsellors, or other trusted adults who can provide support and guidance.
4. Counselling and Therapy: For young people showing signs of problematic gambling, counselling or therapy sessions with qualified mental health professionals can be beneficial. Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) and motivational interviewing are commonly used approaches to address gambling issues.
5. Peer Support Groups: Encourage participation in support groups specifically tailored to young individuals struggling with gambling problems. Peer support can be a powerful tool in helping them realize they are not alone, and that recovery is possible.
6. Family Involvement: Involving the family in the intervention process can have positive outcomes. Family members can learn how to support the young person effectively and create a more supportive home environment.
7. Referral to Specialised Services: In more serious cases, it may be necessary to refer the young person to specialized services such as addiction treatment centres or gambling helplines. These services have professionals experienced in dealing with gambling-related issues and can provide tailored support.
8. Gambling Self-Exclusion Programs: Encourage the use of self-exclusion programs that restrict young people's access to gambling



- establishments or online platforms. This can be a useful measure to prevent further engagement in problematic gambling behaviours.
- 9. Monitoring and Follow-up: Regular monitoring and follow-up are essential to gauge the effectiveness of the intervention and provide ongoing support to the young person.
- 10. Policy and Legislation: Advocating for comprehensive policies and legislation that address youth gambling and protect young people from exposure to gambling activities can also contribute to early identification and intervention efforts.

Summing up, early intervention is crucial in preventing gambling risks from worsening and having long-term negative impacts on young people's lives. The collaboration of parents, educators, healthcare professionals, and community members is vital in supporting those in risk or affected by problematic gambling behaviour.

SPAIN:

Self – prohibition, Phishing alert, parental controls (Qustodio), GAMBAN app

In Spain, early intervention and support for problem gambling are available through various organizations and government initiatives. Some of the key resources include:

The Institute of Youth (Instituto de la Juventud, INJUVE) has been involved in promoting responsible gambling and offering assistance to those struggling with gambling-related issues.

PORUGAL:

In Portugal, efforts have been made to address problem gambling, and there are several resources available for early intervention and referral:

- SICAD is the Portuguese government agency responsible for coordinating and implementing strategies related to addictive behaviours, including gambling addiction. Also, the General-Directorate for Intervention on Addictive Behaviours and Dependencies provides support, prevention, and treatment programs for gambling addiction.

- "Jogo Responsável" (It is a registered trademark that provides several resources related to gambling and the need to practice it consciously. To do so, it essentially focuses on disseminating of information and raising people's awareness towards the gambling practice and how to do it responsibly. It is a brand that explains how people can get support in cases of fraud, criminal acts, technical problems and addiction, without forgetting their respective rights and duties, both of the person and of the entities that "operate" gambling in Portugal).

- Self-Exclusion and Prohibition Services (These services are requested autonomously by the person when they feel that they have developed some kind of problem with gambling. They are available at licensed operators and at a regulator level).

FINLAND:

Finland has a unique approach to gambling, as the gambling market is mostly controlled by a government monopoly. There are several entities involved in promoting responsible gambling and offering support to those with gambling problems.



The National Institute for Health and Welfare in Finland is actively involved in researching and preventing gambling-related harm. They provide information and support for individuals struggling with gambling addiction.

The Finnish Gambling Therapy Centre offers specialized counselling and treatment for problem gamblers.

CYPRUS:

Cyprus has also taken steps to address gambling-related issues and offers support for those experiencing gambling problems.

The National Betting Authority (NBA; nba.gov.cy) is the governmental body in Cyprus responsible for regulating and overseeing gambling activities. They provide information and resources related to responsible gambling and assistance for problem gamblers.

Authorized treatment and prevention centers are coordinated and licenced by the Cyprus National Addictions Authority (NAAC; www.naac.org.cy) and can be found here: <https://www.naac.org.cy/uploads/cd75f6UOvf.pdf>

In all of these countries, helplines, counselling services and support groups are typically available for individuals' seeking assistance with gambling-related issues. It's important to contact the relevant authorities or organizations in each country to access the most up-to-date and comprehensive information on available resources.

6 | GAMBLING PREVENTION AND RISK REDUCTION

Preventing gambling harms and Harm reduction advice (Decision-making, money and time management skills)

Gambling is a widely normalised activity in our societies that has been evolving and adapting to the passing of time and technologies, offering a wide range of games and ways to reach a wide range of audience. In fact, according to the latest survey data collected in the recently published Report on Behavioural Addictions in Spain (Government Delegation for The National Plan on Drugs, Ministry of Health, 2020), 65% of men and 61% of women, aged between 15 and 64, say that they have played gambling and/or games of chance in person during the last year.

The evidence indicates that these practices have associated risks and can lead to problems, both for the person who gambles and for all those around them. One of the most relevant negative consequences is addiction (known as gambling disorder or pathological gambling), which is characterised by the uncontrollable need to invest more and more money or more frequently despite the discomfort or conflicts that this may cause (Browne, M., & Rockloff, M. J., 2018).

Beyond addiction, risking money on gambling and/or betting can lead to conflicts with friends or family, anxiety, social isolation, loss of necessary savings or loss of all assets, including housing. Moreover, these risks can be increased depending on the type of gambling, its availability and also on whether it is accessed in person or online.

It includes specific actions for the prevention and tackling of behavioural addictions in general, and gambling disorder in particular, as well as all the actions carried out throughout the territory through the different bodies and entities that work in this field.



Gambling, while it can in very rare cases generate benefits, carries primarily very serious risks that can completely change a person's life. Some steps that gamblers can take to avoid further risk are:

Aspects to have in mind before gambling

1. Decide on the maximum amount of money.

Use money that is not needed to pay bills or day-to-day expenses. This makes it easier to stop gambling when you lose. Do not try to win back the money you have lost.

2. Carry the money you want to play with in cash and leave your cards at home.

This makes it difficult to play with more money than planned.

3. Be informed about the different types of gambling.

Knowing the different types of gambling and the real odds of winning can help you decide how and how much to risk in games.

One of the most important aspects that we must keep in mind is that in the end, any type of game of chance has the same chances of winning and losing. Therefore, it is important to highlight in this section, the fallacy of the player.

The term Gambler's Fallacy is a clinical term used for 40 years. In all games the probability is the same. The cognitive process when using this fallacy does not depend on the specific game but on the mental constructs of the person, (Matarazzo, O., Carpentieri, M., et al., 2019).



Since we always speak of a game of chance, we must take into account that any type of combination is mediated by chance and therefore, at the level of knowledge, it should be the first question to be discussed.

In some games there is a false perception of control (expert syndrome, personal self-evaluations such as superstitions, increased frequency and quantity of gambling...) but they are still cognitive biases that pressure the player to repeat the behavior, minimizing the negative consequences and appearing the concept of prize expectation, which is still a subjective construct to forget the losses (Matarazzo, O., Carpentieri, M., et al., 2019).

Reducing the typology of games to the maximum, we could highlight two types of games by their content: pure and hard chance, which would include lotteries, dice, type B machines, scratch cards, etc., and another type of games in which there is a perception of control (on the other hand, debatable) such as poker or sports betting.

While gambling

1. Ask yourself why you gamble.

Using gambling as a way to distract yourself from problems and discomforts or to win money quickly can lead to losing control over the game more easily.

2. Take breaks between games.

Taking breaks between games outside of gaming environments can help maintain control over the game and avoid impulsive decisions.



After playing:

1. Talk and share the game being played with people in the environment.

If you feel the need to lie or hide the amount of money or time spent gambling, it may be a symptom of excessive gambling.

Use of self-assessment tools, use of affordability checks

Using self-assessment tools and affordability checks are crucial aspects of responsible gambling practices, aimed at promoting a safer and more controlled gambling environment. These measures are designed to protect individuals from the potential harms associated with excessive gambling and to foster a more sustainable gambling industry.

Self-assessment tools are questionnaires or quizzes that help individuals gauge their gambling habits and behaviours. They allow individuals to reflect on their gambling activities, such as frequency, amount spent, and emotional impact. These tools can raise awareness of problematic gambling behaviour, enabling individuals to recognize potential issues at an early stage. Identifying such problems early allows for timely intervention and support to prevent the development of harmful gambling patterns.

Affordability checks are used by gambling operators to assess whether a customer can afford to gamble and sustain potential losses. These checks aim to prevent customers from gambling with money they cannot afford to lose, protecting them from financial harm and potential debt. They can also contribute to reducing the risk of individuals developing gambling-



related problems by setting appropriate spending limits based on their financial situation. Gambling operators demonstrate a commitment to responsible gambling and customer welfare. This helps to build trust with customers and ensures that the industry operates with integrity.

Summing up, self-assessment tools and affordability checks are part of a broader responsible gambling framework that promotes a culture of responsibility within the gambling industry.

Identification and management of risk situations

When we intervene with a disruptive behaviour, the first thing we have to do is to conduct a clinical interview to determine the pattern of consumption or activity that the specific person presents. In this interview we should highlight the situations and associated thoughts that lead the person to repeat the behaviour. After many years in clinical practice, we can determine some factors that are present in most of the people affected. We point out some of them warning that each patient may be different and therefore would need an individual analysis in order to be able to integrate solutions appropriate to his or her own needs.

- Illusion of control
- Lack of objective measures of how they spend their money.
- Education without limits or rules
- Peer pressure
- Lack of emotional literacy
- Poor social skills
- Poor conflict resolution skills
- Uncontrolled money management



- Loneliness and boredom
- Low self-esteem
- Exciting or psychotropic substance use.
- Low tolerance to frustration.

Once the risk situations have been identified, it will be important to see first of all how they manage all these experiences and what results this management brings them in order to analyse the advantages of the alternative used and to carry out an analysis of the pros and cons of this management.

As you can imagine, the assessment will have a negative result, as the person presents great instability in all fields, but we must be careful with the assessment that the person makes as it is mediated by the cognitive biases inherent to their clinical situation. Therefore, we will have to carry out an objective analysis and contrast with all these biases in order to objectify the situation as much as possible and achieve the person's acceptance of a change of strategies, keeping in mind that only trained and licensed mental health professionals can conduct this theme.

Setting and enforcing limits

Once the cognitive biases existing in a person in relation to the use of gambling have been analysed and a toxic and disruptive relationship has been established for the person, we must be proactive and establish strategies that allow for restructuring, in all areas of the person, in order to achieve a biopsychosocial balance.



When we have this situation, we should set a therapeutic goal for the behaviour in question and in the case of gambling our experience tells us that we strive for total abstinence from the disruptive behaviour.

In the case of other types of addiction, shopping, internet, mobile phones, we could consider achieving controlled use as these are activities that we will always have to carry out and therefore we should achieve control over the execution of this behaviour, but in the case of gambling, as it is not an activity that we have to carry out, it is more effective to consider abstinence than to seek controlled gambling which, according to scientific evidence, has very low success rates.

Once we have the therapeutic objective of our intervention, we have to look for a concrete methodology that will help us to achieve this objective.

When dealing with a behaviour, the first thing to do is to intervene in the behavioural factors that impel the person to repeat the behaviour without being capable of not carrying it out, even over his or her own will.

Therefore, the first intervention should be with reinforced and controlled stimulus control, so that the behaviour (bets) is not carried out due to an external impediment to the subject. In this respect we will apply obligations, control measures, taxation of your day-to-day business without any qualms.

- o Self-prohibition of entry
- o Money Control
- o Justification of expenses
- o Therapeutic accompaniment
- o Self-recording
- o Occupation of free time
- o Attendance at treatment



All these limitations or strategies must be agreed with the person affected, but once they have approved them, we must monitor their compliance because we must never forget their addiction and therefore their changes in thinking depending on the external stimuli they receive.

How protect from strong risk factors in online and on-site gambling?

Protecting young people from strong risk factors in online and onsite gambling requires a multi-faceted approach involving education, parental involvement, and the use of various tools and services. Here are some strategies to consider:

1. Education:

Schools and parents should educate young people about the risks associated with gambling, including the potential for addiction, financial losses, and negative consequences on mental health. It's important to highlight the differences between gambling for fun and gambling as a source of income or escape from problems and empathize the importance of responsible gambling and understanding odds and probabilities.

2. Parental Involvement:

Parents should be actively involved in their children's lives and be aware of their online activities and behaviours. And set clear rules and boundaries regarding internet usage and online activities, including gambling-related websites and apps.

3. Age verification and Identity Checks:



Online gambling platforms should implement robust age verification measures to ensure that underage individuals cannot access their services. Identity checks can help to prevent young people from using false information to create accounts.

4. Self-Exclusion Programs:

Gambling operators should offer self-exclusion programs, allowing individuals to voluntarily exclude themselves from accessing gambling services for a specific period. These programs can be particularly helpful for young people who want to limit their access to gambling sites.

5. Responsible Gambling Tools:

Encourage the use of responsible gambling tools offered by online platforms, such as getting deposit limits, betting limits, and loss limits. Also, time limits can be set to ensure that young people don't spend excessive time gambling online.

6. Monitoring Software:

Parents can use monitoring software or parental control tools to keep track of their children's online activities and block access to gambling sites.

7. Counselling and Support Services:

Provide access to counselling and support services for young people who may be struggling with gambling-related issues and educate young people helplines and support organizations available to assist with problem gambling.



8. Financial Education:

Teach young people about responsible money management and the risks of spending money on gambling and promote saving and financial planning to help them make informed decisions about their finances.

9. Promote Alternative Activities:

Encourage participation in other recreational activities and hobbies that provide a sense of fulfilment and enjoyment.

10. Regulation and Legislation:

Governments and regulatory bodies should enforce strict regulations on gambling operators to protect young people and ensure fair play. Consider limitations on gambling advertisement and sponsorship that may target young audiences.

A combination of these strategies is most effective in protecting young people from the risks associated with gambling, it requires a collective effort from parents, educators, policymakers, governments, and the gambling industry itself to create a safer environment for young individuals.

Promotion of life skills, resilience, soft skills & emotional regulation

Promoting life skills, resilience, soft skills and emotional regulation in young people is crucial for their personal development and overall well-being. We must be focused on some strategies to achieve this.

First, education and awareness, being by educating young people about the importance of life skills, resilience, soft skills and emotional regulation.



Explaining how these skills can positively impact their lives, relationships, and future success.

Secondly, having a structured curriculum. Integrating life skills and emotional regulation training into the formal education system or as an extra-curricular program. Develop a structured curriculum that includes practical exercises, role-plays, and discussions to enhance these skills.

We also cannot forget about experiential training. Encouraging experiential learning through real-life scenarios, simulations, and hands-on activities, allows young people to apply what they learn in practical situations, enhancing their understanding and retention of these skills.

Having also in mind to create a supportive environment where young people feel comfortable discussing their emotions and challenges. Providing access to mental health professionals or counsellors that can guide young people, might them feel in a difficult time more guided and accompanied.

An important point to be remarked is helping young people develop effective communication skills, including active listening, assertiveness, and empathy. These skills are considered essential for building strong relationships and handling conflicts constructively.

In addition to this, problem-solving and decision making are good strategies to be added in this list. Teaching problem-solving and decision-making skills are good facts to encourage young people to approach challenges systematically and evaluate potential outcomes before making decisions.

Introduce stress management techniques, such as mindfulness, meditation, deep breathing exercises, and physical activities like yoga or sports. These practices can help young people cope with stress and regulate their emotions. Apart from promoting healthy leisure



alternatives that allow young people to relax and unwind without harmful behaviours. This can include engaging hobbies, creative pursuits, nature activities or community involvement. Young people really often learn by observing and emulating the behaviour of adults they admire, so be a role model by demonstrating these skills in your own interactions and daily life.

One thing that should be taken into account to stimulate all the above points is to have positive reinforcement, giving them constructive feedback and recognition for efforts they have made. This can motivate them to continue developing all these skills.

One of the last and most important points is the collaboration with parents and guardians. Involving parents in the process by conducting workshops or sharing resources so they can use to support their children's development at home.

Promoting life skills, resilience, soft skills, and emotional regulation is an ongoing process. It requires patience, consistency, and genuine commitment to the well-being of young people.

How to raise awareness about gambling harms

Raising awareness of the problem of gambling in society is necessary in order to fight against pathological gambling or gambling harms.

During the last few years, socially, it has been observed generalized behaviours of acceptance of gambling, as well as an exponential increase at national level of gambling problems among minors. So, it's noted the need to prevent the risks of gambling addiction and to enhance coping skills, self-esteem and social support, as well as other social skills and healthy lifestyle habits among young people.



It is necessary to work to prevent addictions through Social Skills Training, it is possible to modify beliefs, values and attitudes that we all have related to gambling in this case, or to addictions in general.

The main idea when working on prevention is that at the origin of all addictions there are usually feelings of frustration, dissatisfaction, false or mistaken beliefs in relation to addictions, as well as attitudes that facilitate an improper use of them.

Therefore, the primary objective of this manual is for all of us to participate in the development of prevention programs based on the modification of these values, beliefs and attitudes.

The important thing is to promote and strengthen clear, consistent and well-chosen values, which serve as a foundation for us to live in a more meaningful and satisfactory way, without ever having the need to cling to any kind of addiction, having a greater ability to deal with situations in which we may feel forced to make an inappropriate use of gambling, reducing risk factors, should be worked from the mental strength by enhancing and using their tools and strategies.

The group of skills that we consider necessary for the strengthening and optimal development of people are:

- In the area of affective development:
 - Capacity for empathy. To put oneself in the other person's place and in the same circumstances.
 - Capacity for emotional self-expression. To externalize the emotions felt in different situations.
 - Healthy self-esteem. Valuing oneself helps to resist criticism and prevents depressive processes.
- In the field of intellectual development:



- Self-control skills. Having the ability to control oneself before certain situations that would make us react in an immediate and inadequate way.
- Positive self-concept and self-knowledge. Reflecting on oneself, knowing and understanding one's own moods, their motivation and the consequences they may entail. In addition to seeing himself from a positive point of view and valuing himself, he will not need external recognition of his achievements since he is capable of self-motivation.
- Positive attitudes towards health maintenance. From a bio-psycho-social prism. Giving priority to what is beneficial in these three areas and rejecting what is detrimental to the person.

- In the field of social development:
 - Communication skills: very important skill to be able to interact with other people in our environment, being able to convey what is desired.
 - Development of assertive behaviour. Defending my point of view without offending or belittling that of others.
 - Conflict resolution skills. Analysing the situation that has generated the conflict, studying different options for resolution and agreeing on the best of them.
 - Development of the capacity for critical understanding. Having the ability to issue constructive criticism, with the aim of improving a situation, and also to receive those criticisms that are formulated with the same purpose of improvement.
 - Coping strategies: Ability to develop skills to cope with threatening situations, beyond the person's own resources.



Positive thinking and "feeling loved" (positive perceived social support) reduce stress and improve psychological balance.

Raising awareness in the family:

The family acts as a model and as a reference for learning behaviours, influencing the formation of values, ideas and attitudes, which is why it can function as a facilitating element for the inhibition of gambling. In order to do so, it must be informed:

- Games of chance are not practices for minors.
- They do not solve problems, but bring with them negative family, school and economic consequences.
- The importance of responsible gambling
- The reason to play should be for entertainment and not to win money.

Assertive family communication is highlighted as one of the fundamental pillars in the child's environment. In this case, parents will take optimal measures to perceive their children's concerns, listening to them, trying to understand each of the stages they go through and supporting them. In this way, the corresponding treatment could be carried out, such as going to a rehabilitation centre, if they are already dependent to pathological gambling or taking preventive measures if they are at risk, thus avoiding dependence to online gambling by minors (Ruiz et al., 2016).

Therefore, both public authorities and governments acting as protective factors, it is highlighted according to the previous authors that as a preventive measure it would be optimal that they offer sufficient protection and security, thus improving control with respect to the regulation of online gambling especially in the case of minors, in order to



deal with the large number of young pathological gamblers and prevent the number of subjects dependent to this disorder from continuing to grow (García et al., 2015). According to Chóliz and Sainz-Ruiz (2016), if the public authorities provide this security to the population, what is considered one of their responsibilities would be carried out, that is, the omission of the use of stimulating propaganda for the performance of these practices, thus avoiding the recruitment of more young people as future subject's dependent on gambling.

For these reasons, the authors García et al. (2015) suggest the implementation of measures by the government to exercise the necessary control to eradicate the growth of young gamblers, preventing them from participating, ensuring their protection from pathological behaviors and thus taking care of the present and future public health. In short, they are responsible for regulating the practice of gambling and for verifying that this regulation is being carried out in an optimal manner.

Prevention among peers:

This is based on the importance and influence of friends and peers in adolescence. For this reason, the best way to achieve a positive change in the person is through programs that provide information on how to act and who to turn to in the event that a peer suffers from a possible addiction.

Peer-to-peer awareness and prevention generates interest and has proven its effectiveness among different professionals, who are continually evaluating it and taking advantage of its characteristics, especially due to the simplicity of its principles and its high levels of effectiveness.



Peers have credibility among peers and can transmit values and attitudes in a simpler but effective way, getting first the attention and then the better understanding of the target population. Hence, multiply the potential of the new forms of expression of young people, deepening the language and jargon used by young people themselves.

Experts by experience:

Experts by experience introduce multiple stories from their lives and share content and autobiographical information, becoming exceptional influencers, not only in the transmission of information and prevention of gambling, but also in provoking positive attitudes among peers.

A greater effectiveness is achieved with these actions, since it allows sharing reflections on the prevention of pathological gambling, through the use of their specific training and their own experience.

7 | COMMUNICATING ABOUT GAMBLING RELATED HARMS TO YOUNG PEOPLE

The importance of getting the message across correctly

As an Expert by Experience, you pose a powerful feature when it comes to communicating about gambling harms. It is your shared personal experience, which makes people usually much more likely to listen to you. Even though you have an advantage here, it doesn't mean that your audience is automatically very interested in your message. By following the guidelines below, you can ensure you're understood correctly, and your message is impactful.



Understanding your target audience:

If you want that the audience to understand the reality of gambling harms and in what way it could matter to them, you need to provide possibilities for them to relate to your message. This means within your message there must be something the listeners find interesting and relevant for their lives. Gambling harms is of course a very big topic for you, but it is quite likely that your audience is more concerned with other topics. Key here is to understand and get to know the people you are talking to. Whether you talk to young people from a sports club or to a group of parents, it gives you already some information about their background. The young people from a sports club for example might be able to relate more to betting, and you can tailor your message towards that.

Include your audience

Often you do not know much about your audience before. Not only in such cases, but in general, it is good to include people by letting them share about themselves and their perspectives towards gambling. The listener feels valued and respected through that and trust is built between you and your audiences. It also allows you to detect your audience's level of understanding of the topic and you can prioritize certain aspects. When participants talk, remember to listen first and not interrupt them because you disagree, have something to add or an explanation for what they are describing. Allow them to also share about intentions or opinions you would disapprove or are simply wrong. The way you respond.

Set your goal

It helps to define the goal of your communication activity before. Why do you want to talk to these people and what do you want to let them know? What is your key message? This is not just important for yourselves to stay focused and build a coherent speech, but it is also important to let your audience know what your intentions are. It makes it easier for them to follow, connect to the message and learn. When setting your goal, try to keep it simple, relevant, and realistic. Your key message should be communicated briefly in no-longer than 30 seconds or not more than 15 words.

Be honest and authentic & adapt

People are interested in relationship. Be who you are and do not try to hide your feelings too much. For example, when you are nervous about talking in front of others, you can simply let them know. This again will help people to connect to you and identify more with your message. At the same time try to tune in with the mood and energy level of your listeners. Get a sense of the conversation culture within the group and try to adapt your language. Remember though that if you feel the environment is hostile towards you and your message, that you do not need to make yourself vulnerable and share too personal aspects of your experience.

Prepare & practice your performance

While you might know very well what you want to say, one easily forgets that some people are hearing you for the first time. In addition to that, one



can feel nervous about speaking in front of others. Both can be reasons to speak fast, less freely (following your script too much) and unclear. If you practice your speech beforehand, pay attention to speaking slowly and clearly, use rather fewer words but good words, take breaks and allow silence (it gives people time to process and think about what you are saying). Pay attention also to your nonverbal communication: What expressions, mimic, gestures, and movements do you use? In case you are the non-smiling type of a person and rather introverted, it would be sad if a very really relevant message reach fewer people. Therefore, practice smiling and using eye-contact even though it feels fake. Most human beings just need that little bit of extra to connect to you and your message.

Include stories

We all like good stories. Stories are important for listeners to remember later what you were saying and to prompt a reaction to your message. That is what you want from the gambling harms prevention session you are holding. A story in the beginning is good to get people's attention; but rather, try to let your whole presentation act like a story. This is difficult for non-professional performers, but everything is work in progress and over time you can improve towards that. Two tips to begin with:

1. **Use characters/people to describe your point:** For example, when talking about how the gambling industry tries to impact young people's attitude towards gambling, you can describe how you really enjoy watching football with your friends. Everyone is excited about who might win or lose.



2. **How everything changed** – A story without any major change happening is a boring story and almost worthless to share. So, when sharing your story focus on what is/was wrong and what should be/has been done to correct it. Here is a **task** in which you can explore the key events which changed your gambling practices both to less harmful and more harmful practices: Remember your own experience- in what stage of life do you remember gambling for simply entertainment, at a riskier level, or in a harmful way? When did you experience addiction? Use a piece of paper to draw a timeline on which you place your ages, possibly some significant events and different stages of gambling. (What were the reasons for the change and what would have prevented you from sliding into more serious gambling activities?)

Stigma, stigmatising and the language we use

As an Expert by Experience, you are in an excellent position to break the stigma attributed to people who experience gambling harms. Furthermore, very often the language we use is feeding the stigma. Using destigmatizing language helps people to change their attitudes towards gambling and develop a more effective approach towards gambling harm reduction. But what is stigma and what role does it play in gambling harms prevention?

Social stigma is discrimination towards people based on certain perceived features. Those features are allowing other people to distinguish them from the rest of society. People who practice excessive gambling carry in many of our societies a stigma connected to being impulsive,



irresponsible, greedy, irrational, anti-social, untrustworthy, unproductive, thefts, liars and foolish. As a result, others decide to avoid socializing with people with harmful gambling practices. And vice versa people with harmful gambling practices are trying to hide their gambling related issues and are missing out on receiving help. Another negative effect of stigmatization is the development of a self-stigma by people with harmful gambling practices. This shows in negative beliefs about themselves such as being a failure, which results in constantly feeling disappointed in themselves, ashamed, embarrassed, guilty, stupid, and weak. Fighting the stigma connected to harmful gambling practices increases gambling harm prevention.

As mentioned above, the language we use reinforces stigma. By sharing your story, you already contribute greatly to breaking the stigma. Additionally try to set new standards on how to talk about gambling harms. It is very common in everyday situations to use words or terminology which are stigmatizing. Such are “addict” or “problem gambling”. Destigmatizing language would mean for example, to use ‘person with a gambling disorder’ or ‘person who struggles with gambling’ instead of ‘gambling addict’ or ‘problem gambler’. Using person-first language also shows that a person with gambling disorder ‘has’ a problem, rather than she/he ‘is’ the problem. Person-first language helps to reduce the risk of eliciting negative associations or attitudes, or the risk of the person in question feeling blamed. For example, the term ‘addict’ is stigmatizing because it reduces a person down to their disorder. Those terms imply also that the person is the sole problem and ignores that the responsibility for harmful gambling lays also elsewhere, such as with operators or in policies.

Effective communication skills referring to young people

When talking to young people particular teenagers about gambling harms, it is likely that some will have viewpoints, ideas and values that are different from yours or would support taking up activities that you don't understand. Try to see this as a good thing, as this is part of the normal process for young people of moving towards independence. As they strive to be independent and grown-ups, criticism of their opinion, values or actions can have the opposite effect of trying to protect them from harm. Also, when coming across as someone who wants to lecture as a grown-up the "clueless and inexperienced young", it is likely that one's message is not received well. Being non-judgmental therefore and expressing that you want their best, that you want to support and protect them from gambling harm is most important. The following guidelines can help to reach young people better.

About verbal language and words:

Talk as equals to young people, in a respectful way like you would to anyone else in order to avoid any sense of power imbalance in your communication. Use normal words, simple and easily understandable ones, while not adopting swear words or slang from the young people to come across as "cool". Much more important than the actual word is the tone of your voice which informs you about your attitude and emotions towards them.

Body language:

Many argue that body language is even more important than tone. Keeping hands and legs unfolded shows that you are open minded



towards them. Nodding and turning towards the person speaking shows that you are listening and paying respect towards them. If the setting allows, sit when they are also sitting. Eye contact, face-to-face and being closer is recommendable but some feel easily uncomfortable about that so allowing enough space between you and the audience is important.

Boundaries:

As you share your story along with quite personal details, it is important that you do not share too much or unnecessary information. Know what you are willing to share and know the purpose of why you are sharing these parts of your life with them. Some young people might also want to test your boundaries and keep asking to overstep. You can try first to avoid going into details and if it doesn't help pass the question simply back at them, asking why they would like to know about that part? Maybe they have something which occupies them and are looking for answers. Often young people do not communicate directly what is on their mind. Keeping the boundaries is not just important to protect yourself but also about preventing from sliding into a dynamic where everything is about you and your story. The gambling harms prevention sessions should include young people as much as possible.

Listening:

This is where effective communication starts with young people. Through active listening the young people you want to reach understand that you are interested in their lives and perspectives and that you care for them! Encourage them to share their views and opinions and try to listen to them. Ask clarifying questions and give them time and space to express their position towards gambling. Listening and understanding will help you to talk more about those things which matter to them. Apply enough care when you respond, so that you do not sound judgmental or critical



towards them. When giving them space to express it helps them to find the right approach to the topic themselves. You anyways do not have to worry about having the perfect answer to everything but through asking good questions in return you can explore the topic together and your listeners will take more ownership of the message.

Allow silence and breaks:

A young person's brain is still developing, sometimes they need the time to actually take in what has been said, process, think about their answer, and then share what they are thinking. Young people can be concerned about saying the wrong thing, or being perceived as dumb, and sometimes like to take time to coordinate their response in their minds before sharing it.

How to make my own speech/ how to build a story

Your personal story about the experiences you have made with gambling is the key tool you have when acting as a gambling harms prevention agent. But how to build a good story and how to adjust the story towards different settings of your work. When you hold a gambling harms prevention session for a class of high school students your way of sharing your story should differ in comparison to talking to parents. Also, when communicating through the media your story needs to be told in different ways, for example in the setting of an interview. The story you are sharing has the purpose of getting your audience engaged. The story needs to have therefore elements which make people interested in what you're saying, become curious and raises questions to them. You can use



elements of shock, surprise and entertaining features such as a funny video for example. Here are some models which can guide you:

Monomyth:

The monomyth (also called the hero's journey) is a story structure that is found in many folk tales, myths and religious writings from around the world. In a monomyth, the hero is called to leave their home and sets out on a difficult journey. They move from somewhere they know into a threatening unknown place. After overcoming a great trial, they return home with a reward or newfound wisdom – something which will help their community. Using the monomyth to shape your presentation can help you to explain what has brought you to the wisdom you want to share. It can bring your message alive for your audience. If you want to talk to parents about how to protect their children from gambling harms this might be a good format.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKm5ZuBwpJl>

The mountain:

The mountain structure is a way of mapping the tension and drama in a story. It's similar to the monomyth because it helps us to plot when certain events occur in a story. It's different because it doesn't necessarily have a happy ending. The first part of the story is given to setting the scene and is followed by just a series of small challenges and rising action before a climactic conclusion. This format can help to emphasize the dangers of gambling harms, and that everyone can become addicted.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDxxkCNFO0s>

Nested loops:

Nested loops are a storytelling technique where you layer three or more narratives within each other. You place your most important story – the



core of your message – in the centre and use the stories around it to elaborate or explain that central principle. The first story you begin is the last story you finish, the second story you start is second to last, etc. You can use this technique, for example, to describe the life of a gambling addict and the so-called ordinary everyday life - you can carry two lives and reality in parallel. You can also add a close life and reality to your story, creating a story where many different realities go hand in hand.

"Drop":

"Drop" at the beginning is when you start your story at the heart of the action before you start over to explain how you got there. By dropping your audience into the most interesting part of the story, they are held from the start and are committed to figuring out what's going on. But be careful - you don't want to do too much activity right away. Try to hint at something strange or unexpected - something that needs more explanation. Perfect to catch the attention of a board class of teenagers.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7AN3VLLIkdl>

'False start':

A 'false start' story is when you begin to tell a seemingly predictable story, before unexpectedly disrupting it and beginning it over again. You lure your audience into a false sense of security, and then shock them by turning the tables. This format is great for talking about a time that you failed in something and were forced to 'go back to the start' and reassess. It's ideal for talking about the things that you learnt from that experience. Or the innovative way that you solved your problem. "I was at the top of my life. I had just paid off all my debts out of the casino with the jackpot I won. My spouse and I planned a vacation trip with the money left over. Everything felt too good to be true. And it wasn't. I was homeless, my spouse had just left with our children, and I had deposited the last 10



euros to an online casino the night before. " This type is great when you want to make young people aware of their own misperceptions (fallacies) of gambling.

The petal structure:

The petal structure is a way of organizing multiple speakers or stories around one central concept. It's useful if you have several unconnected stories you want to tell or things you want to reveal – that all relate back to a single message. You tell your stories one by one before returning back to the center. In doing so, you can weave a rich tapestry of evidence around your central theory/ phenomenon. It is good to use technology to describe the phenomenon and its features. If you have access to the stories of other experts by experience, you can use these anonymously (and with permission) around your own story to point out aspects of the phenomenon. This is a good type when talking to decision makers and authorities.

Task:

a) Write your own story! If you are not too experienced yet with creating your own story, write your story as it was. From what you feel is an essential starting point to where you are now. In this exercise, you may think that you are giving an interview on the topic of "gambling harms prevention". Don't think too much about story formation, structures, or the expectations of others. Say things as you have experienced them and what things you feel are essential to say. Questions to help you understand the story:



How did my gambling start? How old was I? What games did I play? How or why did I drift into gambling? How did gambling feel, how did it affect me and what kind of feelings did I have? How did my gambling continue? At what point did I start gambling more? What factors influenced the continued gambling? What kind of memories do I have of my history? (Good and bad)? At what point did I find myself gambling too much? What happened then? What was the decisive moment? What has been the phase of change? What is my life like now? What have I achieved at the moment? What do I hope for life and what do I aspire to? Why am I telling my story? What would have helped you or protected you from (harmful) gambling? What shall be done to protect young people from gambling? You can write your story with a computer and print it. After writing your story, videotape the story. Record max. A 10-minute video telling your story. If the story you are writing is really long, you will need to summarize and extract the essentials from your story at this point. Don't read the story on paper, at least so that it isn't clearly visible in the video.

b) Once you have your basic story you can think of how to adapt your story towards the different target groups you might want to share your story with. Those could be policy makers or authorities, youth workers, teachers, students, parents of teenagers (12-18 years old people), members of a sports club (young people in their 20s). As a helping question: What could these different targets groups have done to prevent you from sliding into harmful gambling? What in your message would be particularly interesting for that target group to hear? What in your message could help the audience to take gambling risks more seriously?



How to be persuasive with your message

Writing your story as in the above task will help you to be prepared for questions by your audience and to focus on the most essential information. It is not always possible though nor ideal to share your story in that rather lengthy way. Yes, there are situations where a longer speech is good but young people might find it hard to follow and connect through that way. To be effective in persuading young people not to gamble one needs to be more strategic. Sharing your story will give you a lot of credibility, which is essential in doing effective gambling harms prevention work. Your story should, however, also set the preconditions for getting your audience on board so that the message sparks a change in their attitude. Whether you want to hold a longer prevention session on gambling harms for example in a school, if you want to talk to decision makers or if you are trying to reach young people through social media the following elements will make sure your message becomes effective:

Engage:

Attract your listeners with a strong start. The beginning is all about getting people on board. You need to share something which grabs people's attention. With a story about your devastating experiences with gambling harms or a slide with some shocking figures about gambling practices amongst young people. It is good to introduce yourself in the beginning, but this can easily become a waste of time when people zone out after a few minutes because of a too boring start. Wrapping your message into an interesting story will keep people engaged until the end and ensure it reaches your audience. Use bright colors, music, and movement if possible.

Question:

Your message shall bring change. The best way to do that is by provoking your audience to question the validity of their own beliefs, attitudes and position about gambling. People at risk of gambling harm do have misconceptions about the world of gambling. Challenge such fallacies with crystal clear statements about the realities of gambling harms. By that you do not only give information to your listeners, but they have to check whether that is in line with their own position. If not, the question must arise whether you as the speaker or they themselves are wrong.

Undermine:

Closely connected to *the question* is whether you provide a credible alternative. As an Expert by Experience, you have a lot of credibility as you have gone through all that yourself. Here you have excellent tools through sharing examples from your own or other experiences. The idea is to further feed the disillusionment of the listener and bring them away from their current beliefs towards a healthier attitude. Sometimes you might need to go back and forth between the “question” and the “undermine” element.

Inform:

Here you do nothing but share information relevant and most importantly undeniable by having it backed by reliable sources. When you think of the previous elements as the ones to destruct, you are basically building with this stage the new beliefs. Sharing your experience makes the information already very evident. It is good though to provide insights from science and research to prove your point. Focus on gambling harms which matter to your audience. Losing your wife or job is a big thing for everyone,



however young people are maybe more receptive to the friends to lose. Be careful not to make it sound more dangerous than it is. For example, yes everyone can get addicted to gambling but not everyone who does practice gambling occasionally will slide irreversible towards seriously harmful gambling. This would break your credibility and the listeners will reject your message entirely.

Persuade

Finally, with persuading you try to fix those points which are still a bit loose. If you have built an atmosphere of trust and acceptance between you and your audience an open-minded round of discussion can bring those questions and opinions forward. By following the other communication guidelines earlier, you can navigate through that phase and strengthen the motivation of your audience to accept your message.

8 | PREPARING A GAMBLING HARM PREVENTION SESSION

A good way to do gambling harm prevention work amongst young people is by working with typical gambling myths, such as the following:

- “Gambling is nothing but entertainment.”
- “The worst that could happen is that I lose some money.”
- “People have to gamble for years to get addicted.”
- “Only people who are addicted to gambling experience any forms of harm.”
- “Gambling is a quick way of making lots of money if you know what you’re doing.”
- “Gambling is a good distraction from other problems you might have.”

- “My gambling only affects me.”
- “Buying a loot box is no different from buying a kinder egg.”
- “You have to lose a lot of money to experience harm from your gambling.”
- “Gambling on free sites or apps is harmless because no money is used.”
- “People who win the lottery are happy for the rest of their lives.”

Think of your own experience with gambling and formulate a few sentences in how you would deconstruct such myths. What is the “truth” about gambling from your perspective? What are the harms you experienced while maybe believing such myth yourself? Below you find some guidelines on how to build your counter argument with the help of the Minto Pyramid.

Minto Pyramid

Make your communication
more efficient and clear.

Conclusion

Key arguments

Detailed information

untools.co

Starting with the Conclusion:

What was your experience/harm when you gambled in contrast to the myth? Keep it short and concise. As an example: “Gambling caused mental health problems to you”



Providing Key Points:

Then you support it with key arguments or main points, in another words, it's important to explain the "reason why" behind the harm you experienced. As an example: The lack of sleep and the worries about the losses you have made, the lies you had to come up with.

Detailed Information:

Finally you must think of facts, evidence, numbers, results. Your own experience can be used as facts/evidence, on this matter. For example: It is inevitable that you will experience losses when you gamble due to the extremely low probability of winning. The more you gamble, the more likely it will become that you lose. So, here you have to start dealing with the consequences; if you keep gambling the consequences will only get worse. At one point you will feel that there is no way out of the problems anymore but taking your life.

Once you feel prepared to deconstruct such myths about gambling while using examples of your personal experience, think about the setting and formats in which you could bring that into practice.

In schools, you could play a game with the students. For example, everyone who believes that (certain myth) is true goes to the right and everyone who doesn't goes to left. Once everyone has decided you share your experience and knowledge with them about that myth. You can go through the examples above one by one and /or use your own myths. Another possibility is to create short videos. Here, begin with stating the myth and then deconstruct it while using examples of your own experience. You can then share these videos on social media.

9 | CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



deposit limit setting (for players and corporates), among others. Overall, these strategies tend to be placed at an individual level of intervention, by ensuring there's accessible information and options when it comes to need of limiting gambling practice. However, even with these efforts, it's important to start working with people before they even start engaging in gambling, through sensitization and raising awareness approaches.

After this, we discuss the theoretical background behind the concepts of Gambling and Gambling harms (**Point 3**). In general, Gambling is a risk-taking activity, of uncertain outcome, that has the objective of betting something in order to win another thing of greater value, such as money. The practise of gambling can be perceived as a continuum, with its acute form reaching pathological/harmful levels. On these latter levels, Gambling has serious consequences for the person and their respective support system, particularly when it comes to finances; overall employment, training and education opportunities and performance; physical and mental health; stability and quality of social interactions; among others.

Given this, it's important to think of young people specifically, as they are particularly vulnerable to multiple factors that might lead to engagement in gambling – factors we call motivators and facilitators, motivators and facilitators. We highlighted, as well, the necessity of identifying problematic tendencies when it comes to gambling in young people (**Point 4**), especially because there are many misconceptions that can



deposit limit setting (for players and corporates), among others. Overall, these strategies tend to be placed at an individual level of intervention, by ensuring there's accessible information and options when it comes to need of limiting gambling practice. However, even with these efforts, it's important to start working with people before they even start engaging in gambling, through sensibilization and raising awareness approaches.

After this, we discuss the theoretical background behind the concepts of Gambling and Gambling harms (**Point 3**). In general, Gambling is a risk-taking activity, of uncertain outcome, that has the objective of betting something in order to win another thing of greater value, such as money. The practise of gambling can be perceived as a continuum, with its acute form reaching pathological/harmful levels. On these latter levels, Gambling has serious consequences for the person and their respective support system, particularly when it comes to finances; overall employment, training and education opportunities and performance; physical and mental health; stability and quality of social interactions; among others.

Given this, it's important to think of young people specifically, as they are particularly vulnerable to multiple factors that might lead to engagement in gambling – factors we call motivators and facilitators, motivators and facilitators. We highlighted, as well, the necessity of identifying problematic tendencies when it comes to gambling in young people (**Point 4**), especially because there are many misconceptions that can



obscure young people's perspectives about gambling's outcomes. Young people can develop problematic gambling behaviours when they can't identify its potential risks for themselves and for the ones around them. This leads to increasing issues, that can lead to the decrease of their overall performance in school, regular tasks and other previous hobbies, as well as relationships.

To prevent such harms, it's important to plan interventions, which can target individual, community and society levels. This is where Experts by Experience come in (**Point 5**), as your story can be an important humanizing factor, casting light upon Gambling harms and placing it at a reachable level, that can enhance the efficiency of sensibilization and prevention efforts. In other words, your experience can raise awareness on these risks, and you can combine it with official studies' data and overall conclusions, to reinforce your messages and turn Gambling's harms prevention palpable. Besides the EbEs, gambling harms prevention requires a close work of education, awareness, deconstruction of preconceptions and promotion of mental health protective factors. Coordinated efforts, not only from major society's institutions, such as schools and governments, but also from families and peers are necessary to achieve these.

Finally, we spoke about the importance of communicating your message effectively (**Point 6**). As Experts by Experience, your first-person perspective can improve people's understanding on gambling harms. However, this can only be done if the message has the desired effect on the target audience, which can be ensured by some good communication practices. For example, preparation always needs to be done, as your



speech and overall communication manner needs to match your target audience, as you have learned here. Preparation requires understanding your target audience, what the theme implies to them, and which role they can adopt when deciding to take action on it. As such, you need to adapt the language and the approach you use, according to these. Plus, it's important to be flexible and not adapt an imposing posture when communicating a message, especially with young people. Be available to hear their points of view and adopt a speech which opens space for that. Share what's necessary, without getting into personal details that can compromise you or the target audience.

With this, you have learned how to prepare a gambling harms prevention session (**Point 7**), which should focus, for example, on dismantling stereotypes, misinformation and disinformation, through practical and non-formal approaches. It's a good practice to utilize reachable and daily-life examples, that people can quickly borrow from to reflect and comprehend your message. It is very important that you always consider where to deliver your messages according to the stakeholders and key actors that can play an important role in preventing gambling harms.

From schools to policy makers, you'll need to adjust your posture, speech and overall activities framework, to ensure that your experience reaches them through the right channels and that they're sensitized and willing to take action, within their reach.

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APPENDIX

Here you can find some extra resources from the project countries.

Finland:

1. Sosped – Pelirajaton, peer support and information for gamblers and those close to them: <https://pelirajaton.fi/>
2. Gambling Harms Helpline: [0800 100 101](tel:0800100101)
3. Finnish Institute for Health and Wellbeing:
<https://thl.fi/en/web/alcohol-tobacco-and-addictions/gambling>
4. EHYT, Finnish substance abuse and gambling harm prevention association: <https://ehyt.fi/en/>

Spain:

1. FEJAR (Spanish Federation of Rehabilitated Gamblers), trabajosocial@fejar.org, 900 200 225, <https://fejar.org/>
2. DGOJ (Directorate-General for Gambling Regulation), DPDHacienda@ordenacionjuego.gob.es ; 914 250 811, <https://sede.ordenacionjuego.gob.es>
3. Juego Seguro (Safer Gambling), Jugarbien@ordenacionjuego.gob.es, 91 571 40 80, <https://www.jugarbien.es/contact>
4. PNSD (National Plan on Drugs), sdgpnsd@sanidad.gob.es, 918226135, <https://pnsd.sanidad.gob.es/>



5. Pantallas Amigas (For prevention, safe and Healthy Use of the Internet), info@pantallasamigas.net, 605728121, <https://www.pantallasamigas.net/contacto/>
6. Protégeles (Child welfare and protection), info@bienestaryproteccioninfantil.es, 914682662, <https://bienestaryproteccioninfantil.es/contacto/>

Portugal:

1. Addictive Behavior Intervention Service (Serviço de Intervenção nos Comportamentos Aditivos - SICAD)

Email: sicad@sicad.min-saude.pt

Telephone: +351 211 119 000

Website: sicad.min-saude.pt

2. Life Line (Linha Vida) - an anonymous, free and confidential Psychological Counseling Service in the area of addictive behaviors and addictions, namely gambling addictions. It is managed by SICAD (see above).

Email: 1414@sicad.min-saude.pt

Telephone: 14 14 (from 10am to 6pm, Portugal time).

3. Responsible Gambling (Jogo Responsável)

Email: geral@jogoresponsavel.pt

Telephone: +351 211 332 775 / +352 911 884 125

Website: <https://jogoresponsavel.pt/>

4. Gambling Regulation and Inspection Service (Serviço de Regulação e Inspeção de Jogos - SRIJ)

Email: info.srij@turismodeportugal.pt

Telephone: +351 211 140 200

Website: <https://www.srij.turismodeportugal.pt/pt>

Cyprus:

1. Cyprus National Addictions Authority (NAAC)

Helpline: 1402

<https://www.naac.org.cy>

2. National betting Authority

<https://nba.gov.cy/en/>

3.. Safer Gambling.

Helpline 1456 for people above 22 years old

Helpline 1456 for people up to 21 years old

<https://safergambling.gov.cy/en/>

4.. Counseling & Psychotherapy Centers

Telephone: 25580448

<http://pharoscenter.org>



5.. PHAROS CENTRE": Pharos also support a toll free helpline for problematic gambling, The 1422 helpline operates daily from 9 A.M. until 7 P.M. anonymously and free of charge.

6.. Counseling Station «APOFASIZO» («ΑΠΟΦΑΣΙΖΩ»).

Telephone: 70005537

<https://psychotherapycyprus.com/>

7.. Counseling Station for the Electronic Addiction «ELECTRA-A» («ΗΛΕΚΤΡΑ-Α»).

Telephone: 70005531 <https://psychotherapycyprus.com/>

8.. Self-help groups «Mesogeios» («Μεσόγειος»)

Telephone: 24645333

A peer-support group for occasional or systematic gamblers



