

**Diversity of risk behaviours, mental condition
and social experiences in 15-year-olds
from Lithuania, Malta and Poland**

Report prepared by the European Institute for Integrated Prevention
within the **Youth Positive Potential** project

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Introduction

In December 2019, teams from three countries (Lithuania, Malta and Poland) began cooperation within the Youth Positive Potential (YPP) project, financed by the European Erasmus programme.¹

The main objective of the YPP project is to adapt the Polish prevention programme Archipelag Skarbów (Archipelago of Treasures, AoT) to the national contexts of youth risk prevention in Malta and Lithuania.

Archipelago of Treasures® is an interactive and dynamic prevention programme for students aged 14 to 16. As an integrated prevention programme, it teaches a healthy and responsible lifestyle and encourages young people to avoid alcohol, drugs, violence and pornography. At the same time, Archipelago of Treasures® shows young people the positive potential that they have and which is worth developing. Two 4-hour workshop blocks, over two consecutive days, turn a group of teenagers into ‘treasure hunters’, where the treasures are: happiness, health, lasting love and fulfilling one’s passions and dreams.

In Poland, the prevention programme for adolescents entitled Archipelago of Treasures, designed by Szymon Grzelak, PhD, has been implemented for more than ten years, and is very well received by students, their parents and teachers. The results of an evaluation study in Poland, conducted by the Institute for Integrated Prevention (Instytut Profilaktyki Zintegrowanej, IPZIN) in 2019–2020, indicate that it brings many of the expected preventive results.

As part of the project, work is being carried out in each partner country on the necessary changes in the programme so as to adapt it to the needs of young people. The partners share their knowledge of the problems of teenage students in their countries and relate these to the scope and objectives of integrated prevention, which the Archipelago of Treasures programme implements.

In 2020, with the COVID-19 epidemic limiting the planned project activities, the idea was born to produce a collective report on the comparison of youth problems in the three partner countries. The preparation of a comparative report on the social situation and

¹ Erasmus Plus, Strategic Partnerships, Project’s Reference No: 2019–1 -MT01-KA201-051251

risk behaviours of 15-year-old youth was to help the discussion and decision-making of the partners when adapting the AoT programme to the conditions of each of the three project countries.

The collective report prepared by the European Institute for Integrated Prevention (EIIP) is based on the analysis of available data from representative international comparative surveys in which Lithuania, Malta and Poland participated.

The Report uses data from two surveys:

1. a survey of health behaviour in school-age children carried out in 42 countries/regions in 2018, as part of the Health Behaviour in School-age Children (HBSC) research network. The survey provides data on the mental well-being and health of 11-, 13- and 15-year-olds and is conducted in four-year cycles.² The topic of risk behaviours has long been of interest to the HBSC research network. In the 2017/2018 international survey protocol, the chapter on risk behaviours included questions about smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, smoking cannabis, sexual activity, cyberbullying, bullying and physical violence as obligatory.
2. a survey concerning the use of psychoactive substances and other forms of risk behaviours among teenage students in Europe, carried out as part of the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs Study (ESPAD) research network, in which 35 countries participated in 2019. ESPAD is a survey of students aged 15 to 16 that is conducted every 4 years.³

The following considerations were in favour of using data from both above-mentioned surveys for the YPP project:

1. all three partner countries, Malta, Lithuania and Poland, participated in them,
2. the surveys were conducted on representative samples including 15-year-olds (which ensures subject comparability). The HBSC survey covered youth aged 11,

² The data used in the present report are taken from the report entitled Spotlight on adolescent health and well-being, Edited by: Jo Inchley, Dorothy Currie, Sanja Budisavljevic, Torbjørn Torsheim, Atle Jåstad, Alina Cosma, Colette Kelly & Ársæll Már Arnarsson, Findings from the 2017/2018, Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey in Europe and Canada, International report, VOLUME 1. KEY FINDINGS, access: <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/332091/9789289055000-eng.pdf>

³ The data used in the present report are taken from the report entitled ESPAD Report 2019 Results from the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs, ESPAD Group, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2020, access: http://www.espad.org/sites/espad.org/files/2020.3878_EN_04.pdf

13 and 15, while the ESPAD survey covered youth born in 2003 (aged 15 to 16 at the time of the survey) and 2001 (aged 17 to 18 at the time of the survey). As can be seen, the age cohorts surveyed make it possible to relate data concerning 15-year-olds both to younger adolescents (aged 11 and 13 – HBSC) and to older ones (aged 17 to 18 – ESPAD)

3. identical questionnaires were used for all countries (which ensures measurement comparability)
4. the two surveys were conducted at the same time/year (which ensures overall temporal comparability). Data refer to the years 2018 (HSCB) and 2019 (ESPAD), in line with the assumed 4-year research cycle of both repeated surveys.
5. It should be remembered, however, that both surveys were conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The above-mentioned attributes of both surveys (HBSC from 2018 and ESPAD from 2019) made it methodologically sound to compile the problems and risks faced by 15-year-olds in each partner country, as well as the characteristics of their mental condition and their living environments.

An additional argument for the development of this report was that both surveys collected data on youth risk behaviours, which are targeted by the preventive activity of the Archipelago of Treasures programme. Therefore, the comparison of national profiles of youth risk behaviours is helpful in adapting the Polish AoT programme to the specific needs of youth problem prevention in the partner countries.

It is worth mentioning here that the scale of problem behaviours in a group of adolescents depends not only on simple socio-demographic indicators of their situation, but also on the social culture of the country, its norms and laws. The effectiveness of pro-health indications, both medical and related to youth development support, may be limited by country-specific traditions and laws. This can be seen in relation to drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes. Even pro-health changes in social policy and legislation do not change social habits in a short time. All the more so, prevention should be seen as an influence over the long term, towards changing the attitudes and habits of the young generation.

1. Risk behaviours of the highest magnitude in all three partner countries

On the basis of the data from the two surveys used in this report, it is possible to identify risk behaviours of the highest magnitude, exhibited by the majority or half of 15-year-olds in Lithuania, Malta and Poland. These are: drinking alcohol, intense presence of girls on social media, and intense computer game playing among boys.

a. Drinking alcohol

The results of both surveys, HBSC 2018 and ESPAD 2019, show that alcoholic beverages are the most prevalent psychoactive substances among 15-year-olds in all three participating countries. In Lithuania, Malta and Poland most 15-year-olds (both boys and girls) have already drunk alcohol in their lives (HBSC 2018, Tables 12 and 13).

The highest number of declarations of alcohol consumption (ever in life) can be seen in Lithuania (70% in total, girls 74%, boys 67%). In Malta, the total is 65%, girls 63%, boys 68%. In Poland the proportions are 63% in total, girls 66%, boys 60% (HBSC, Table 12). This picture was also confirmed in the ESPAD 2019 survey. The results show that 80% of 15 to 16-year-olds in each of the three countries have already tried alcohol (ESPAD, Table 13), and about 1/3 of students in each of the three countries start that at the age of 13 and earlier (ESPAD, Table 19).

In each country, the percentage of adolescents declaring to have drunk alcohol in the last 30 days (between 30% and 40%) is worrying. This result shows the size of the group that either reached for alcohol shortly before the survey or perhaps were already drinking regularly.

b. Intense presence of girls on social media

The results of the HBSC 2018 and ESPAD 2019 surveys show that in all three countries there is a very large group of girls who use social media to excess.

The data of the HBSC 2018 survey show that the partner countries in the project share a similarly high magnitude of this type of risk behaviours among girls (Poland – 56%, Lithuania – 50%, Malta – 49%). The proportions of such declarations among boys are lower (Poland – 41%, Lithuania – 36%, Malta – 42%).

As for social media, it is mainly girls who use them in a problematic way; the vast majority of them use social media for more than 4 hours per day on non-school days (HBSC 2018:

Lithuania 72%, Malta 75%, Poland 60%), while on school days: Lithuania 45%, Malta 52%, Poland 48%. Many girls are aware of the problems associated with this (58% in Lithuania, 56% in Malta, 40% in Poland).

c. Intense computer game playing (including online) among boys

According to ESPAD 2019 data, in each of the three countries almost half of boys spend four or more hours on this pastime on non-school days (48% in Lithuania, 46% in Malta, 43% in Poland). Time spent playing games (not for money, not gambling) differs significantly between girls and boys. Intense playing is considerably more common among boys. Among girls, less than 15% report such playing time (14.1% in Lithuania, 13.4% in Malta, 10.8% in Poland). On school days, these percentages are significantly lower in each group and in each country (the value examined was the time spent playing games in the last 30 days on a typical non-school and school day).

Is playing computer games a safe pastime for boys? Not for everyone, but for the group playing over 6 hours a day it can be a real risk. In Lithuania, 12% of boys play more than 6 hours a day on school days, in Poland – 11%, and in Malta – 10% (on non-school days there are more than twice as many such boys).

2. Risk behaviours of disturbing magnitude in the three countries

When certain risk behaviours start to affect one of five, four or three adolescents, they should be considered a significant problem, especially when it comes to drugs or Internet addiction. At issue here is a high risk of serious disruption to the normal development of a large group of young people. The need for prevention as well as education is obvious in such cases.

a. Intense use of social media

Intensity of online contact

Intense communication on social media (via so-called social networking applications) is when, according to survey participants, online contact with different people took place 'almost all the time throughout the day.' It has already been shown above that intense use of social media concerns half of the girls in each of the three countries. Boys are involved in social media in a lower proportion, but, as should be noted, this proportion is also disturbing (in Lithuania – 36%, in Malta – 42%, in Poland – 41%, HBSC 2018). While the

percentages of teenagers spending over 6 hours a day on social media are disturbing in the ESPAD 2019 data, it is noteworthy that for school days, these percentages are considerably lower (Table 13, p. 22), as if those playing maintained a school-weekend rhythm of the week.

Preference for online contact

A strong preference for online contact was considered to be when young people indicated that it was much easier for them to talk about feelings, concerns and secrets on social media than in face-to-face contact. Such declarations were collected in Lithuania from 17% of boys and 15% of girls, in Malta from 18% of boys and 10% of girls, and in Poland from 25 % of boys and 22% of girls (HBSC 2018, Table 15, p. 21).

Assessment of risky social media use

In the ESPAD 2019 survey, students responded to the following three statements, among others:

- (a) I think I spend way too much time on Social Media
- (b) I get in bad mood when I cannot spend time on Social Media
- (c) My parents say that I spend way too much time on Social Media.

The indicator built on the confirmation of the three above-mentioned statements allows us to assess the level of the negative impact of social media (values from 0 to 3). Its high level concerned 39% of boys and 58% of girls in Lithuania; 44% of boys and 56% of girls in Malta, and 24% of boys and 40% of girls in Poland.

In the HBSC 2018 survey, on the other hand, young people were asked nine questions about their assessment of the impact of their intense social media use on various aspects of their lives. Indexed scores ranged between 0 points (no negative impact) and 9 points (high negative impact). Data for 15-year-olds with 6 or more points on the above-described scale show that in Malta, 18% of girls and 17% of boys are at risk of high negative impact of social media; in Lithuania – 8% of girls and 7% of boys, and in Poland – 10% of girls and 6% of boys (HBSC 2018, Table 20, p.24).

b. Drugs

Both of the above-mentioned surveys collected information on cannabis use among adolescents. Data collected in the three countries show that the vast majority of 15-year-olds have had no experience with the drug. However, the percentages of 15-year-olds experimenting with the drug are disturbing, especially in Poland (22%, according to

ESPAD 2019) and in Lithuania (19%, according to ESPAD 2019). In Malta, the percentage is slightly lower (12%, according to ESPAD 2019). These percentages indicate an urgent need for prevention and education. Similar results were obtained in the HBSC 2018 survey. In both surveys, boys were generally more likely than girls to have had experience with cannabis.

c. Early sexual activity

According to the results of the HBSC 2018 survey, sexual intercourse was started by 13% 15-year-olds in Poland, 16% in Lithuania, and 20% in Malta. In each of the countries, boys are significantly more likely to have had sexual initiation.

d. Gambling (including online)

In the ESPAD 2019 survey, gambling is specified as playing games for money in at least one of the following forms in the last 12 months: slot machines, playing cards or dice for money, lotteries, betting on sports or animals. Online gambling was also considered in this survey.

The proportion of boys who engage in gambling defined in this way is: in Lithuania – 25%, in Malta – 16%, in Poland – 24% (girls: Lithuania – 13%, Malta – 12%, Poland – 14%) (ESPAD 2019). It can be seen that boys gamble for money more frequently than girls, more often in Lithuania and Poland than in Malta.

3. Significant differences between the countries in youth attitudes and risk behaviours

Adolescents vary from country to country in some risk behaviours. This can be seen for cigarette smoking, using non-prescription tranquillizers and painkillers, peer school violence, cyberbullying, and intense gambling among boys. In these cases, there is a need to adapt the Polish version of the Archipelago of Treasures integrated prevention programme.

a. Cigarette smoking

The results from both surveys, HBSC 2018 and ESPAD 2019, are consistent. As regards cigarette smoking, the highest number of 15-year-olds who smoke is in Lithuania (more than half), while in Poland, about 40% have already smoked cigarettes in their lives. In both countries mentioned, relatively similar smoking percentages are observed among

boys and girls. In Malta, the percentage of those who declare having smoked cigarettes in their lives is significantly lower.

b. Use of non-prescription tranquillizers or sedatives

It is noteworthy that there is a relatively high percentage of girls in Lithuania (29%) and in Poland (20%) who take non-prescription tranquillizers or sedatives. Boys report taking such non-prescription drugs significantly less often. In Malta, the proportions for both girls (3.8%) and boys (2.5%) are much lower (see further; Table 8, ESPAD 2019 data).

c. Intense gambling use among boys

The highest number of boys at risk of gambling is in Lithuania – 28%, a lower number in Poland – 15%, and the lowest in Malta – 9.4% (ESPAD 2019). The differences between the countries are explained by the degree of acceptance of gambling in societies and the presence of gambling in the family environment. These two factors are conducive to taking up gambling and moving to problem gambling. Over the past two decades, online gambling has become more popular and easily accessible, mainly due to the growing popularity of smartphones and tablets, and also of social media.

d. Peer violence at school

In the HBSC 2018 survey, being bullied by someone at school at least twice in the past several months was reported most often by students from Lithuania (girls 21%, boys 26%). In Malta and Poland, a much lower, small percentage confirmed being a victim of bullying (7%).

Being the perpetrator of bullying others at school at least twice in the past several months was admitted by 21% of Lithuanian boys. In Malta and Poland, a much smaller percentage of boys confirmed being a perpetrator of peer school violence (Malta – 3%, Poland – 7%).

As for involvement in a physical fight at least 3 times in 12 months, boys declared such involvement more frequently (Lithuania – 13%, Malta – 13%, Poland – 12%) than girls (Lithuania – 4%, Malta – 6%, Poland – 6%).

e. Cyberbullying

In all three countries, the perpetrators of cyberbullying are more often boys than girls. In the HBSC 2018 survey, cyberbullying was defined as sending malicious messages, posting

on walls or in e-mails, posting or sharing photos or videos online without permission. The data collected indicate that the highest number of boys who have engaged in such behaviours is in Lithuania – 31%, a lower number in Poland – 24%, and the lowest in Malta – 16%.

4. Protective and risk factors in the social environment of adolescents

The analysis of data collected over many years by IPZIN and numerous other analyses show that some features of the social environment of adolescents can be regarded as protective factors against risk behaviours, while others can be regarded as risk factors. Protective factors include supportive family relationships, while risk factors include poor family communication and easy access to psychoactive substances in the environment. Below are national profiles of such factors based on results from both surveys: HBSC 2018 and ESPAD 2019.

a. Supportive family relationships as protective factors

In Lithuania and Malta, most 15-year-olds say they have strong family support. In Poland, such opinions are significantly less frequent, especially among girls (Poland – girls 48%, boys 51%, Lithuania – girls 65%, boys 69%, Malta – girls 67%, boys – 54% (HBSC 2018). In all three countries, the vast majority of both girls and boys declare easy communication with their mothers. The vast majority of boys declare easy communication with their fathers, while girls declare it slightly less often (half of girls) (HBSC 2018).

b. Family eating practices as a risk factor

In the results of the HBSC 2018 survey, we see clear differences between the countries in family eating practices. In Malta, almost half of 15-year-olds (47%) report that they have a meal with their family every day. This number is significantly higher than in families in Lithuania (39%) and Poland (20%).

As regards Poland, we can show the results of other, earlier surveys, which indicate that in 2004, time for a daily meal together was the habit of 83% of Polish families, while in 2014 this habit was declared by just over half of Polish families (TNS Poland survey). The decrease in this family practice is due to many factors, including the incompatibility of family members' schedules.

Meanwhile, the results of numerous studies show that family meals integrate the family and are one of the important factors that shape the eating habits of children and adolescents. Research results also prove that the more frequently a family has a meal together, the more rational the diet of children and adults (Hammons and Fiese 2011).

Celebrating family meals also improves adolescents' well-being and is an opportunity to shape their communication skills and strengthen relationships with their families (Eisenberg et al. 2004). This, in turn, can prevent youth from engaging in risk behaviours (Harrison et al. 2015). Studies prove that the more often girls have meals with their families, the less often they use alcohol, cigarettes or cannabis. For boys, no such relationship has been shown (Eisenburg et al. 2008).

c. Risk factors in the school environment

Feeling pressured by schoolwork as a risk factor. In all three countries, there is a widespread perception among students, especially girls, that they are pressured by schoolwork. According to the data of the HBSC 2018 survey, in Malta, feeling pressured by schoolwork is declared by 80% of girls and 62% of boys, for Lithuania, the proportions are 70% for girls and 54% for boys, and for Poland – 56% for girls and 34% for boys.

Peer violence at school. Being bullied by someone at school at least twice in the last few months was reported most often by boys from Lithuania (girls 21%, boys 26%). In Malta and Poland, a much lower, small percentage of 15-year-olds confirmed being a victim of bullying.

d. Protective factors in the school environment

According to data from the HBSC 2018 survey:

Classmate support. The three countries differ in how frequently students report support from their classmates. In Malta, the majority of students declare strong support (girls – 68%, boys – 63%), in Lithuania almost half (girls – 44%, boys – 55%), while in Poland such declarations are fewer (girls – 32%, boys – 41%).

Teacher support. In Malta, the majority of students declare strong support from teachers (girls – 58%, boys – 56%), while in Poland such students are a minority (girls – 21%, boys – 31%). In Lithuania, such opinions are not a majority, but there are more of them than in Poland (girls – 28%, boys – 40%).

Liking school. The HBSC 2018 survey also asked students about their liking school. The answer 'I like school a lot' was given by 41% of girls and 28% of boys in Lithuania, 25% of girls and 22% of boys in Malta, and 21% of girls and 27% of boys in Poland.

To sum up, in light of the data presented, school is a differently and ambivalently perceived environment in each of the three countries. Students in the three countries have one thing in common: a widespread belief that they are overburdened with schoolwork. As a stressor, it can be a significant risk factor.

e. Peer support as a protective factor

The percentages of responses indicating high peer support, as measured by the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, show that in Lithuania and Malta, the majority of 15-year-olds report strong peer support for themselves (Lithuania 61%, Malta 63%). In Poland, such opinions are significantly less frequent (30.5%). In all three countries, girls declare strong support from friendly peers slightly more often than boys, but this does not change the overall result for a given country.

f. Access to drugs as a risk factor

The opinion that cannabis is easily accessible is shared by a sizeable proportion of 15-year-olds in each of the three countries (Poland – 35%, Malta – 33%, Lithuania – 24%, ESPAD 2019). Fewer adolescents report easy access to ecstasy (Poland – 15.5%, Malta – 15%, Lithuania – 15.5%, ESPAD 2019). Being a boy or a girl does not differentiate this opinion. Although the data collected in the three countries show that the vast majority of 15-year-olds have not had experience with marihuana, the percentages of youth experimenting with this type of drug in Poland (22%, ESPAD 2019), Lithuania (19%, ESPAD 2019) and Malta (12% ESPAD 2019) indicate the need for prevention and education.

g. Easy access to electronic media and the Internet as a risk factor

The results of both surveys, HBSC 2018 and ESPAD 2019, show that in all three countries there is a relatively large group of adolescents who use social media, games and gambling in a risky way.

Intense electronic communication, i.e. having online contact with someone almost all the time throughout the day, is declared by 56% girls from Poland, 50% girls from Lithuania

and 49% from Malta. The percentages of such declarations in boys are lower (Poland – 41%, Lithuania – 36%, Malta – 42%) (HBSC 2018).

Data from the HBSC survey show that in all three countries, most teenagers communicate so intensely with close friends (Poland – 42%, Malta – 38%, Lithuania – 36,5%). Considerably fewer 15-year-olds communicate so intensely with other categories of people, such as friends from a larger friend group, friends met through the Internet or other people (Table 41, p. 37, HBSC 2018)

Young people were also asked how much they prefer online contact with friends and other people in personal matters. The results show that the group strongly preferring this type of communication ranges from 10% to 25%, depending on the country and sex (Table 42) (HBSC 2018).

As for social media, there are significantly more girls using them in a risky way than boys. Social media are used more than 4 hours per day on non-school days by the majority of girls (Lithuania 72%, Malta 75%, Poland 60%), and on school days: Lithuania 45%, Malta 52%, Poland 48%. The ESPAD 2019 survey created an index of self-assessment of problems with social media. Its results show that a relatively large number of girls are aware that they have a problem with this (Lithuania 58%, Malta 56%, Poland 40%).

As regards gaming, boys are users three times more often than girls. Differences between boys and girls can also be seen in the results of the self-assessment index of gaming problems, where the percentage of youth declaring a high level of problems in Lithuania is 36% for boys, 17% for girls; in Malta – 36% for boys, 12% for girls, and in Poland – 21% for boys, 6.6% for girls (ESPAD 2019).

h. Easy access to (non-prescription) tranquillizers/ sedatives and painkillers as a risk factor

What draws attention is the relatively high percentages of girls in Lithuania (29%) and in Poland (20%) taking non-prescription (OTC) drugs. Boys declare taking non-prescription drugs significantly less frequently. In Malta, the proportions of girls and boys are low, not exceeding 4%.

i. Decreased well-being and self-rated health as a risk factor

The results of the HBSC 2018 survey, obtained by using the *Satisfaction with Life Scale* (scale values from 0 to 10 points), show that the lowest life satisfaction is declared by girls

from Malta (average 6.5p.) and Poland (average 6.8p.), and the highest – by boys from Lithuania (average 7.7 p.) and Poland (average 7.3 p.).

In all three countries, the declared lower level of life satisfaction correlates with the declared low mood more often than once a week, and with experiencing multiple health complaints more than once a week.

As for experiencing negative emotions such as nervousness and irritability more than once a week, girls in all three countries report them significantly more often than boys. The lowest number of girls experiencing nervousness is in Malta (39%), while the highest is in Poland (48%). In Lithuania, this percentage is 45% (HBSC 2018).

To sum up, the data collected in both international surveys of adolescents show the need for and usefulness of introducing the Archipelago of Treasures prevention programme, which takes into account the diversity of developmental risks of 15-year-olds in the partner countries. There is also a justified need to adapt the Polish integrated prevention programme to the conditions of the partner countries, Malta and Lithuania, due to the developmental risks signalled in the surveys.

In all partner countries, persuading younger adolescents not to drink alcohol remains an ongoing challenge for parents, teachers and prevention professionals. Data for Malta, Lithuania and Poland also show a large scale of new risk behaviours, such as various forms of intense use of electronic media (boys – computer games, girls – social media). The data concerning the reduced well-being of a large percentage of girls is disturbing.

The variation in problem behaviours among the partner countries in the project, as shown by the results of the surveys presented, indicates directions that should be taken in adapting the Polish programme to individual domestic/national contexts.

There is another conclusion from the secondary analysis of the results of the ESPAD 2019 and HBSC 2018 surveys. The data show us the situation just before the COVID-19 pandemic, and so provide a reliable background for interpreting the results of surveys conducted in and after 2022. They can be helpful in comparing the potential and problems of adolescents before and after the pandemic. In this way, the results presented can be helpful in identifying new areas of risk as consequences of the difficult social and health experience of young people.

II. Risk behaviours of 15-year-olds in Lithuania, Malta and Poland.

Specific data

This section of the paper will present in tables the detailed results of the two representative surveys (ESPAD 2019 and HBSC 2018) conducted on younger adolescents (15 to 16-year-olds), as a comparison for Lithuania, Malta and Poland.

1. Use of psychoactive substances

Using psychoactive substances such as drugs, alcohol, tobacco products and tranquillizers/ sedatives and/or painkillers during adolescence should definitely be counted among risk behaviours.

a. Drinking alcohol

In each of the three countries, alcohol consumption is part of their traditional cultures. It should be remembered that Europe is the region with the highest level of alcohol consumption in the world. According to data from 2018, people over 15 drink 9.24 litres of pure alcohol per person. This is almost twice the world's average (National Alcohol Policy, 2018). Alcohol is therefore a substance commonly encountered by young people in each of the three partner countries.

According to data from the HBSC 2018 survey, in the three countries surveyed, the majority of 15-year-olds have already drunk alcohol in their lives. The most frequent declarations of this can be seen in Lithuania (70% in total, girls 74%, boys 67%). In Malta – 65% in total, girls 63%, boys 68%. In Poland, the proportions are 63% in total, girls 66%, boys 60%.

According to data from the HBSC 2018 survey, in each of the three countries, the percentage of those declaring to have drunk alcohol in the last 30 days before the survey is relatively high, as are the percentages of those declaring to have been in a drunken state (at least twice in their lives and in the last month). This is especially true of Lithuania.

Table 1 Declarations of having drunk alcohol by gender and country (HBSC 2018) (%)

15-year-olds who have:	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
ever drunk alcohol	66	60	74	67	63	68	59	60
drunk alcohol in the last 30 days	35	34	34	31	40	47	36	38
been drunk at least twice	21	17	30	35	15	26	18	22
been drunk in last 30 days	13	12	19	22	8	16	13	16

The results of another survey, ESPAD 2019, concerning youth aged 15 to 16, indicate even higher percentages of adolescents who have tried drinking alcohol. Approximately 80.0% of 15 to 16-year-olds in each of the three countries have already attempted drinking.

Table 2 Alcohol consumption: ever drinking, drinking in the 30 days before the survey, and alcohol intoxication by gender and by country (ESPAD 2019) (%)

Alcohol use:	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		ESPAD 2019 average	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
lifetime use	80	82	75	83	81	82	79	78
30-day use	45	49	24	30	47	49	47	46
intoxication (heavily drunk, staggering when walking, mumbling, not remembering what happened)	12	10	7.4	6	11	13	14	13

ESPAD 2019 data also show that about 1/3 of students in each of the three countries drank alcohol at the age of 13 and earlier (Table 5). The results of both above-mentioned surveys show that convincing teenagers to be alcohol abstinent is a serious and ongoing challenge for parents, teachers and prevention specialists.

b. Cigarette smoking

The prevalence of tobacco smoking was studied in two time dimensions – the respondent’s entire life and the last 30 days before the survey. The first allows us to determine the prevalence of attempted tobacco smoking. The second is useful for estimating the size of the group of current smokers, perhaps occasional smokers, and perhaps regular ones. Data on lifetime smoking experiences are provided in Table 3.

The majority of Lithuanian 15-year-olds (57%) smoke cigarettes, in Poland the group of smoking students is smaller (39%), and smoking is the least common in Malta (17%).

Table 3 Cigarette-smoking by gender and by country (HBSC 2018) (%)

15-year-olds who have	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
ever smoked/lifetime use	40	38	56	59	14	20	27	29
smoked in last 30 days	19	16	27	31	8	14	15	15

Table 4 presents the results of the ESPAD 2019 survey, which also show the percentages of students who have already smoked cigarettes in their lives and who smoked cigarettes in the last 30 days. In both surveys, the results indicate a similar range of percentages of youth smoking cigarettes.

Table 4 Cigarette-smoking by gender and by country (ESPAD 2019) (%)

15-16 year-olds who have	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		ESPAD 2019 average	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
ever smoked/lifetime use	49	50	55	54	21	24	43	40
smoked in last 30 days	21	22	21	21	9.5	12	20	20

The ESPAD 2019 survey also examined the prevalence among students of smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol before **the age of 13**. Early alcohol initiation is a problem in each of the three countries (almost one in three 15-year-olds drank alcohol before the age of 13). As for cigarette smoking, only Poland and Lithuania had disturbing results (see Table 5). In Malta, several times fewer teenagers started smoking cigarettes before the age of 13.

Table 5 Early onset of substance use by students at the age of 13 or younger (ESPAD 2019) (%)

Early onset of substance use by students at the age of 13 or younger	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		ESPAD 2019 average	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
cigarettes	24	18	37	29	6.8	8	20	15
e-cigarettes	0	0	24	15	5.5	4.3	14	7.9
alcohol	32	26	30	36	33	34	36	29

The results of the HBSC 2018 survey show that the greatest increase in alcohol consumption and cigarette smoking is observed between the ages of 13 and 15. The use of such psychoactive substances is more frequent among younger boys, with the gender gap narrowing at the age of 15.

c. Drug use

The results of the ESPAD 2019 survey presented in Table 6 show the percentages of young people who reported having used any drug, cannabis and/or ecstasy at least once in their lives.

Table 6 Drug use ever in life among 15-year-olds (ESPAD 2019) (%)

Drug use:	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		ESPAD 2019 average	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
any drug	25	19	20	18	12	12	19	14
cannabis	24	18	20	17	11	12	18	13
ecstasy	3.4	1.8	2.7	3.3	1.3	0.9	2.5	2.1

Data collected in the three countries in the ESPAD 2019 survey show that the vast majority of 15-year-olds have not yet had experience with drugs. However, the percentages of those experimenting with such substances in Poland (22%), Lithuania (19%) and Malta (12%) indicate the need for prevention and education. All the more so since opinions about easy access to drugs are shared by a sizeable proportion of 15-year-olds (see Table 44).

The results shown in Table 7 were obtained in the HBSC 2018 survey, and those in Table 8 in the ESPAD 2019 survey.

Table 7 Cannabis use among 15-year-olds (HBSC 2018) (%)

15-year-olds who have	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
ever used cannabis	14	15	14	21	6	11	11	15
used cannabis in the last 30 days	4	7	5	10	2	9	5	8

The data show the percentages of 15-year-old students who reported having used cannabis at least once in their lifetime, as well as those who used it in the last 30 days. We

can see that those having already experimented with cannabis in their lives are much more numerous than those who used it in the last month.

Table 8 Cannabis use among 15-year-olds (ESPAD 2019) (%)

15-year-olds who have	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		ESPAD 2019 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
ever used cannabis/ lifetime prevalence of the use of cannabis	18	24	17	20	12	11	13	18

As can be seen in Tables 7 and 8, the data from both surveys indicate a similar order of magnitude in terms of the percentages of youth experimenting with cannabis in each of the three countries (the exception being the data for girls from Malta).

d. Use of non-prescription tranquillizers/ sedatives and painkillers

What is noteworthy in the results of the ESPAD 2019 survey is the relatively high percentage of girls in Lithuania (29%) and in Poland (20%) who take non-prescription tranquillizers/ sedatives and painkillers. Boys report taking such non-prescription drugs significantly less often. In Malta, the proportion of both girls and boys is low and does not exceed 4%.

Table 9 Use of painkillers, tranquillizers/ sedatives and anabolic steroids* (ESPAD 2019) (%)

Use of the pharmaceuticals:	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		ESPAD 2019 average	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Tranquillizers/ sedatives	9.2	20	11	29	2.5	3.8	5.1	8
Painkillers	4.1	8.5	1.4	2.7	2.7	2.5	3.3	4.8
Anabolic steroids*	2.4	1.7	1.8	1.1	2.6	1.5	3.3	0.6

*anabolic steroids in Poland are officially available by prescription

2. Risky activity on the Internet

The technological revolution associated with the popularization of the Internet has caused significant changes in social communication. Presence in the virtual world and in social media has become commonplace. Electronic media and the Internet proved to be a

powerful tool of social influence, both in terms of building social support networks and exclusion. Daily use of the Internet has become a common practice, especially among young people. This is shown by the data of both surveys cited here, HBSC 2018 and ESPAD 2019. The data allow us to estimate risk behaviours in the area of screen and Internet use.

a. Online communication: intensity, preferences, consequences

In the last edition of the HBSC survey, carried out in 2018, the leading topic was communication via electronic media. The focus was on three issues: intensity of online contact, preference for online contact over other forms of relationships, and problematic use of social media.

Table 10 15-year-olds and online communication by gender and country (HBSC 2018) (%)

15 year-olds who report	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Intense electronic media communication	41	56	36	50	42	49	36	46
A strong preference for online communication *	25	22	17	15	18	10	17	16
Problematic social media use **	6	10	7	8	17	18	7	10

* mean score of 4 or more for 3 statements

** % of those who responded yes to at least six of the nine questions of negatively impacted on various aspects of their lives

In the ESPAD 2019 survey, on the other hand, in order to assess the intensity of social media use, students were asked how many hours on average, over the last 7 days, they had spent communicating with others on social media (using, for example, WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, Skype, blogs, Snapchat, Instagram, Kik), distinguishing between school days and non-school days (weekends, holidays).

Table 11 Average number of hours spent on social media in the last 7 days on a typical school day and non-school day by gender (ESPAD 2019) (%)

Hours spent on social media in the last 7 days	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		ESPAD 2019 average	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Non-school day								
none	8	3.8	6.2	2.9	4.1	1.5	6.5	2.5
half an hour	9.1	4.7	5.3	1	3.7	2.3		
about 1 hour	17	9.1	10	5.1	7.1	4.2		
2-3 hours	27	23	26	20	25	17		
4-5 hours	20	28	25	33	26	28		
6+ hours	19	32	27	39	34	47		
School day								
none	8	4.2	8.7	3.4	12	5.5	8.9	4
half an hour	12	4.8	10	4.5	7	5.5		
about 1 hour	20	13	18	11	17	13		
2-3 hours	31	31	33	36	33	31		
4-5 hours	15	26	16	25	17	26		
6+ hours	13	22	14	19	14	26		

b. Problematic computer game playing (including online)

In the ESPAD 2019 survey, students were also asked about the number of days in the last week and the average number of hours over a 30-day period they had spent playing games on electronic devices (i.e. computers, tablets, consoles, smartphones), also in relation to school days and non-school days.

The time spent on playing computer games differs significantly between girls' and boys' groups. Intense computer game playing is much more common among boys. In each of the three countries, almost half of the boys spend four or more hours on this entertainment on non-school days (48% in Lithuania, 46% in Malta, 43% in Poland). Among girls, such playing time is reported by less than 15% (14.1% in Lithuania, 13.4% in Malta, 10.8% in Poland). On school days, these percentages are significantly lower in each group and in each country (ESPAD 2019).

The time spent on gaming in the last 30 days on a typical non-school and school day is shown in Table 12.

Table 12 Time spent on gaming in the last 30 days on a typical non-school and school day (ESPAD 2019) (%)

Gaming hours last 30 days:	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		ESPAD 2019 average	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Non-school day								
none	14	47	10	37	9.1	34	14	48
half an hour	5.7	16	5.3	21	6.8	25		
about 1 hour	11	14	12	13	12	16		
2-3 hours	26	13	26	15	26	12		
4-5 hours	22	5.5	21	8.2	19	6		
6+ hours	21	5.3	27	5.9	27	7.4		
School day								
none	16	47	16	46	21	47	22	56
half an hour	9.4	19	11	24	17	26		
about 1 hour	19	16	23	14	22	13		
2-3 hours	30	11	28	10	21	7.1		
4-5 hours	15	3.4	10	3.6	8.8	4.3		
6+ hours	11	3.6	12	2.5	10	2.8		

Is playing computer games a safe pastime for boys? Not for everyone, but for the group playing over 6 hours a day it can be a real risk. In Lithuania, 12% of boys play more than 6 hours a day on school days, in Poland – 11%, and in Malta – 10% (on non-school days there are more than twice as many boys).

c. Self-perception of problematic social media use

Risky social media use is that which interferes with young people’s well-being, daily functioning, fulfilling their duties or direct interactions with others. In the HBSC 2018 survey, 15-year-olds were asked 9 questions about whether social media use negatively impacted on various aspects of their lives. Index values ranged from 0 (no perceived negative impact) to 9 (perceived strong negative impact).

Table 13 presents the percentages of those who responded affirmatively to at least six of the nine questions.

Table 13 Risky social media use (HBSC 2018) (%)

15-year-olds who have problematic social media use	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
those who responded yes <i>to at least six of the nine questions</i>	10	6	8	7	18	17	10	7

The ESPAD 2019 survey, on the other hand, examined not only adolescents' perception of their own problems related to **social media use, but also to risky gaming (including playing games online)**. Three indicators were used to estimate the perceived risk for both of the above-mentioned risk behaviours. Students were asked to confirm or deny the following statements about themselves:

1. I think I spend way too much time on Social Media
2. I get in bad mood when I cannot spend time on Social Media
3. My parents say that I spend way too much time on Social Media

Based on the responses confirming the above statements, two indexes were created in the ESPAD 2019 survey for self-perceived problems: one with social media, and the other with the use of gaming.

It was assumed that index values of 0-1 indicated a low level perceived by the student, while values of 2-3 indicated a high level of the above-mentioned problematic behaviours.

Table 14 presents the percentages of students who obtained indexed values of 2 or 3 (medium and high level of risk).

Table 14 Self-perceived high risk of problems with social media use and gaming online by gender and country (ESPAD 2019) (%)

15 year-olds who report	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		ESPAD 2019 average	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
self-perceived problems with social media use	24	40	39	58	44	56	37	54
self-perceived problems with gaming online	21	6.6	36	17	36	12	31	10

The data in Table 14 show significant variation in the self-assessment of problems related to both social media presence and online gaming (variation between countries and gender

groups). Regarding social media, problems with them are reported significantly more often by girls than boys (in Lithuania and Malta they are reported by the majority of girls). As for online gaming, boys are more likely to see their own problems with it than girls (nearly 40% of boys in Lithuania and Malta). To sum up, social media cause trouble to adolescents significantly more often than online gaming.

d. Risky use of gambling (including online)

In the ESPAD 2019 survey, the prevalence of gambling for money includes involvement in at least one of the following gambling activities in the last 12 months: playing on slot machines, playing card or dice for money, lotteries or betting on sports or animals (Table 16).

According to data from the ESPAD 2019 survey, the percentage of boys who gamble is: in Lithuania – 25%, in Malta – 16%, in Poland – 24% (girls: in Lithuania – 13%, in Malta – 12%, in Poland – 14%).

Table 15 Traditional gambling and online gambling: prevalence in the past 12 months (ESPAD 2019) (%)

Gambling for money and online gambling	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		ESPAD 2019 average	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Gambling	24	14	25	13	16	12	29	15
Online gambling	13	2.3	13	1.5	5.2	2.4	13	2.7

Estimation of the percentage of boys at risk of excessive gambling among all young gamblers shows that in Lithuania they account for 28%, in Malta – 9%, in Poland – 15%.

Table 16 Estimation of percent gamblers among those having gambled in the past 12 months, by gender (ESPAD 2019) (%)

	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		ESPAD 2019 average	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Excessive gambling	15	4.1	28	2.1	9.4	3.8	19	5.9
Problem gambling	9.2	3.2	6.1	1.4	6.3	3.6	6.3	2.4

Online gambling as well as traditional gambling are undoubtedly risk behaviours. Playing gambling games, that is games in which money is staked and can be won (slot machines,

card or dice, lotteries (bingo, lotto), betting on sports). Compared to other risk behaviours, gambling and the problems associated with it receive little attention in the public debate. For adults, gambling addiction is usually considered a relatively marginal phenomenon. It should be remembered, however, that gambling leads to all sorts of problems both for the players themselves and for their families and the closest social environment. The ESPAD 2019 survey used two indicators of problem gambling. The first referred to the need to put more and more money into gambling, and the second to lying to someone important to the respondent about how much gambling costs. Symptoms of gambling for money as a problem pastime were reported many times more often by boys than by girls. Both boys and girls reported more often the need to bet more and more money than to lie to others about how much they gambled.

Online gambling is not very popular among young people. The ESPAD 2019 survey results indicate a low prevalence of problem gambling among boys and a very slight prevalence among girls.

3. Violence against peers

In the HBSC 2018 survey, we find data on aggression against peers. The questions concerned the involvement of 15-year-olds in bullying and intimidating peers at school and involvement in fights.

a. Bullying others at school and involvement in fighting

Lithuanian boys most often admitted to bullying others at school at least twice in the last several months (21%). In Malta and Poland, both among boys and girls, a much lower, small percentage confirmed being a perpetrator of physical violence.

As for being involved in physical fighting at least 3 times in 12 months, boys were more likely to declare such involvement (Lithuania – 13%, Malta – 13%, Poland – 12%) than girls (Lithuania – 4%, Malta – 6%, Poland – 6%).

The results presented in Table 17 show the percentages of students who reported bullying others at least two or three times in the last several months, and those who were involved in a physical fight at least three times in the last 12 months.

Table 17 Peer violence among 15-year-olds (HBSC 2018) (%)

15-year-olds who have.....	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
bullied others at school at least twice in the past couple of months	5	7	9	21	2	3	4	7
involved in a physical fight at least three times in the past 12 months	6	12	4	13	6	13	5	12

b. Involvement in cyberbullying

The results presented in Table 18 show what percentage of 15-year-olds engaged in cyberbullying at least once in the last several months by sending malicious messages, posts or e-mails, and posting or sharing photos or videos online without permission.

Table 18 Involvement of 15-year-olds in cyberbullying (HBSC 2018) (%)

15-year-olds who have	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
cyberbullied others at least once in the past couple of months	16	24	14	31	3	16	8	14

4. Early sexual activity

According to data from the HBSC 2018 survey, the percentages of 15-year-olds who have ever had sexual intercourse are in each country: 20% in Malta, 16% in Lithuania, 13% in Poland. In each of the countries, boys have had sexual initiation significantly more often than girls (Malta 25%, Lithuania 22%, Poland 16%).

Table 19 shows the percentages of 15-year-olds who responded 'yes' to the question about having had sexual intercourse. The question included colloquial terminology (i.e. 'having sex') so that respondents understood it was about full penetrative sex.

Table 19 15-year-olds after sexual initiation (HBSC) (%)

Sexual activity	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
15-year-olds only were asked whether they had ever had sexual intercourse	10	16	10	22	15	25	14	24

15-year-olds were also asked whether they or their partner had used contraceptives, such as condoms or contraceptive pills, during the last sexual intercourse.

a. Contraception use during the last sexual intercourse

The results presented in Table 20 show what percentage of 15-year-olds responded affirmatively to the question whether they or their partners had used a condom during the last sexual intercourse.

Table 20 15-year-olds who have used a condom or contraceptive pill during the last sexual intercourse (HBSC 2018) (%)

Contraception use at last sexual intercourse:	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
a condom	66	50	58	61	33	46	58	64
used the contraceptive pill	14	22	9	13	6	19	25	27

The results show that the use of contraceptive pills is less common, but it varies both across countries and in girls' and boys' groups. In all three countries, boys more frequently indicated that their female partners had used contraceptive pills than sexually active girls reported using them.

b. Not using contraception during the last sexual intercourse

Data collected in the HBSC 2018 survey also show what percentage of 15-year-olds did not use either a condom or a contraceptive pill during the last sexual intercourse (HBSC 2018).

Table 21 15-year-olds who used neither a condom nor a contraceptive pill during the last sexual intercourse (HBSC 2018) (%)

Contraception use: AT LAST SEXUAL INTERCOURSE	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
used neither a condom nor the contraceptive pill	30	34	38	29	61	43	29	23

The results presented in Table 21 show a differentiated situation in the subgroups of girls and boys in each of the countries studied. In Poland, one in three girls and one in three boys having sexual intercourse did not use the contraceptives mentioned above. In Lithuania and Malta, girls did not use such contraceptives significantly more often than boys.

The percentages of sexual risk behaviours are disturbing. In Malta, 15% of girls and 25% of boys were sexually active at the age of 15. Of these, 61% of girls and 43% of boys used neither a condom nor a contraceptive pill during their last sexual intercourse. In Lithuania, 10% of girls and 22% of boys have already had sexual initiation (of these, 38% of girls and 29% of boys did not use the above-mentioned contraceptives during their last sexual intercourse). In Poland, 10% of girls and 16% of boys have started sexual intercourse; out of this group, 30% of girls and 34% of boys did not use contraceptives.

III. Mental well-being and self-rated health of 15-year-olds in Lithuania, Malta and Poland. Specific data

Mental well-being, self-rated health

In the HBSC 2018 survey, students were also asked about their life satisfaction, and about their emotions such as irritability, nervousness, feeling low, and how often during the last six months they experienced various symptoms such as headache and stomach-ache. Data concerning these topics are presented below.

1. Life satisfaction

Young people, 15-year-olds, were asked to assess their life satisfaction using a Cantril Ladder type scale, with values from 0 to 10: higher values indicate the best assessment of life, while the lowest values indicate the worst assessment. Respondents were also asked

to indicate the rung of the ladder on which they would currently place their life (values from 0 to 10) in terms of their satisfaction with it. Table 22 presents mean life satisfaction for girls and boys in the three countries.

Table 22 Mean life satisfaction in the surveyed 15-year-olds (HBSC 2018) (%)

15-year-olds who report that they	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
assess life satisfaction on a scale from 0 to 10 (mean)	6.8	7.3	7.3	7.7	6.5	6.9	7.2	7.6

The results of the Satisfaction with Life Scale (scale values from 0 to 10) show that the lowest satisfaction with life is reported by girls from Malta (mean 6.5p.) and Poland (mean 6.8 p.), and the highest – by boys from Lithuania (mean 7.7 p.) and Poland (mean 7.3 p.).

2. Negative emotions such as nervousness and irritability

In the HBSC survey, young people were asked how often they had felt nervous and irritable in the last six months. Response options ranged from ‘about every day’ to ‘rarely or never’. The results presented in Table 23 show what percentage of the surveyed adolescents get nervous and irritable more than once a week.

Girls in each of the three countries report feeling negative emotions much more frequently than boys. In Lithuania and Poland, nearly half of the girls report feeling nervous and irritable more than once a week. In Malta – almost 40%.

Table 23 Negative emotions experienced by 15-year-olds more than once a week (HBSC 2018) (%)

15-year-olds who report:	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
feeling irritable more than once a week	45	32	47	27	39	23	38	22
feeling nervous more than once a week	48	41	45	30	42	23	37	22

Boys report these emotions less frequently than girls. The smallest differences between girls and boys in experiencing negative emotions are observed in Poland (with relatively high levels). Larger differences between girls and boys can be seen in Lithuania and Malta.

3. Feeling low

In the HBSC 2018 survey, young people were asked how often they had felt low in the last six months. Response options ranged from ‘about every day’ to ‘rarely or never’. The results presented in Table 24 show the percentages of 15-year-olds who reported having low mood more than once a week.

Table 24 15-year-olds who reported having low mood more than once a week (HBSC 2018) (%)

15-year-olds who report that they:	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
feel low more than once a week	38	21	31	15	39	22	31	15

In each country, girls were significantly more likely than boys to report feeling low more than once a week.

4. Self-rated health

In the same survey, 15-year-olds were asked how often in the last six months they had experienced symptoms such as headache, stomach-ache, backache, feeling low, irritability, nervousness, difficulties in getting to sleep, feeling dizzy. Response options for each symptom ranged from ‘about every day’ to ‘never’. The results presented in Table 25 show the percentages of students reporting two or more of the listed health conditions experienced more than once a week in the last six months.

In each of the three countries, girls were mostly and significantly more often likely than boys to experience two or more of the listed symptoms more than once a week in the last six months.

Table 25 Self-rated health of 15-year-olds (HBSC 2018) (%)

15-year-olds who report that they:	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
have multiple health complaints more than once a week	58	40	50	27	63	43	52	30

It is worth noting that the declared reduced level of life satisfaction in all three countries correlates with the declared feeling low more than once a week and experiencing multiple health complaints more than once a week.

As for the belief that one is too fat, however, we observe significant variation between the countries. This is shown in Table 26.

Table 26 Self-rated obesity of 15-year-olds (HBSC 2018) (%)

15-year-olds who report that they:	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
are too fat	52	31	41	19	25	23	36	22

Lithuanian boys are least concerned about their weight, while Polish girls are most concerned.

IV. Diversity of living environments of adolescents in Lithuania, Malta and Poland. Specific data

For authors and implementers of prevention programmes, it is also important to know the conditions in which adolescents live and develop. Characteristics of the living conditions of 15-year-olds give them important clues as to both the factors that enhance the effect of prevention and those that weaken its effects with regard to problem behaviours of students.

1. Family

For adolescents, the family remains the most important living environment. Its structure, family relationships, and material and cultural resources largely determine the conditions for the development of a young person.

a. Family structure

The HBSC 2018 survey data show that young people live in different types of families. The results presented here show what percentage of 15-year-olds live with both parents, in single-parent family or in a different form of care (for example, in foster care or under the care of a non-parent family member).

Table 27 The family structure in Poland, Malta, Lithuania (HBSC 2018) (%)

Country	Both parents	Single parent	Step family	Other
Poland	77.7	15.8	5.2	1.3
Lithuania	67.9	19	10.2	2.9
Malta	76.3	15.4	6.2	2.1

The majority of adolescents in the three countries live in full families with both parents.

b. Immigrant status of parents

In the HBSC 2018 survey, young people were asked where they and their parents had been born. The results presented in Table 28 show the proportion of young people according to their immigrant family history.

Table 28 Immigrant roots of the surveyed 15-year-olds (HBSC 2018) (%)

Immigrant status	Malta	Poland	Lithuania
Non-immigrant	74.2	98.5	No data
First generation	8.1	0.7	
Second generation	17.7	0.8	

It is worth noting that in Malta nearly 26% of adolescents have immigrants in their close family history, while in Poland the percentage of such young people is 1.5%.

c. Family affluence and parental employment (HBSC 2018)

In the HBSC 2018 survey, young people were also asked about their family's material living conditions. The six-item Family Affluence Scale (FAS) was used to measure the average level of family affluence in each country. Its possible results range from 0 to 100, where 100 is the maximum possible assessment of family wealth, and 0 is the minimum possible assessment of wealth. The results presented here show the average FAS score for each country.

Table 29 Average affluence on the Family Affluence Scale (FAS) by country (HBSC 2018)

Country	Mean FAS Index Score (0-100)
Poland	60
Lithuania	53
Malta	66

Young people were asked in the HBSC 2018 survey about their parents’ employment situation: whether their mother and father were employed outside the home, whether they were not employed but looking for a job, or whether they were not employed and not looking for a job. The results presented in Table 30 show the percentages of young people who lived in families with four different parental employment profiles.

Table 30 Parental employment (HBSC 2018) (%)

Country	Both parents employed or not looking for jobs	Father only unemployed (looking for job)	Mother only unemployed (looking for job)	Both parents unemployed (looking for job)
Poland	97.1	0.7	2.1	0.2
Lithuania	95.2	1.3	3.1	0.3
Malta	No data			

d. Family eating practices

The results of the HBSC 2018 survey show that the three countries differ in family eating habits. Data in Table 31 show that in Malta, compared to Lithuania and Poland, significantly more adolescents say that they have a meal with their family every day. The bonding and communicative effect of shared family meals is worth noting.

Table 31 Family eating practices of 15-year-olds (HBSC 2018) (%)

15-year-olds who:	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
eat a meal with family daily	17	24	35	44	49	46	42	46
eat breakfast every school day	57	64	44	55	44	50	48	56

However, when it comes to such an eating practice as having breakfast before going to school, significant differences can be seen between girls and boys. Girls in each country are less likely to have breakfast before school.

e. Communicating with parents

Young people aged 15 were asked in the HBSC 2018 survey whether they found it easy or difficult to talk to their mother and father about their problems. Response options ranged

from 'very easy' to 'very difficult'. The results presented in Table 32 show what percentages of respondents said that it was easy or very easy for them to talk to their mother.

Table 32 15-year-olds who find it easy or very easy to talk to their mother and father (HBSC 2018) (%)

15-year-olds who find it easy or very easy	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
to talk to their mother	74	80	80	80	81	80	79	82
to talk to their father	54	72	57	77	No data		76	84

f. Support from the family

A sense of support from others is an important significant protective factor for the psychological development of adolescents. The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support was built in the HBSC 2018 survey. Young people were asked in several questions how much their family really tries to help them, how much emotional support they can get from their family when they need it, how much they can talk to their family about their problems, and whether their family is willing to help them solve their problems. Response options ranged from 'very strongly disagree' to 'very strongly agree'. The results presented in Table 33 show the percentages of 15-year-olds who obtained a score classified as high support from the family in the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support.

Table 33 15-year-olds who report feeling high family support (HBSC) (%)

15-year-olds who report feeling high support	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
from family	48	51	65	69	67	54	64	67

In Lithuania and Malta, a clear majority of students declare that they have strong support from their family. As shown in Table 32, in Poland such declarations are fewer (girls 48%, boys 51%).

2. School

Adolescents aged 15 spend most of their time at school. What happens at school can be a significant protective factor for their development (positive school/class climate, teacher

support), but it can also be a risk factor disturbing their development (peer violence, school-related stress).

a. Support from classmates

The HBSC 2018 survey data presented in Table 34 show the percentages of students who reported high support from their classmates. The level of support was measured by several questions about whether they see that their friends really try to help them, whether they can count on them when things go wrong, whether they have friends with whom they can share their sorrows and joys, and whether they can talk to them about their problems. Response options ranged from ‘very strongly disagree’ to ‘very strongly agree’.

Table 34 15-year-olds who reported high support from classmates (HBSC 2018) (%)

15-year-olds who report:	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
feeling high classmate support	32	41	44	55	68	63	51	60

b. Support from teachers

In the same survey, young people were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with three statements about their teachers, and a composite index was constructed on the basis of their responses. The results presented in Table 35 are the percentages of students who reported a high level of teacher support.

Table 35 15-year-olds who report a high teacher support (HBSC) (%)

15-year-olds who report:	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
feeling high teacher support	21	31	28	40	58	56	41	48

c. Pressure from schoolwork

The results presented in Table 36 show the percentages of students feeling pressured by schoolwork (responses ‘a little’ and ‘a lot’).

Table 36 Students who feel pressured by schoolwork (HBSC 2018) (%)

15-year-olds who:	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Feel pressured by schoolwork	56	34	70	54	80	62	51	38

d. Liking school

In the HBSC 2018 survey, young people were asked how they felt about school. Response options ranged from 'I like it a lot' to 'I don't like it at all'. The results presented in Table 37 show the percentages of adolescents who declare they like school a lot.

Table 37 15-year-olds who like school a lot (HBSC 2018) (%)

15-year-olds who:	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
like school a lot	21	27	41	28	25	22	22	21

Most teenagers who like their schools a lot are in Lithuania.

3. Peers**a. Support from peers**

In the HBSC 2018 survey, 15-year-olds were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with statements that they have friends: with whom they can share their joys and sorrows, talk about their problems, who really try to help them, and who they can count on in times of need. The categories of responses ranged from 'very strongly disagree' to 'very strongly agree'. The results presented in Table 38 show the percentages of responses indicating high support from peers, as measured by means of a peer support scale.

Table 38 15-year-olds who report feeling high peer support (HBSC 2018) (%)

15-year-olds who report feeling high support	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
from peers	36	25	67	55	70	56	65	55

b. Violence from schoolmates

According to HBSC 2018 survey data, being bullied by others at school at least twice in the last several months was most frequently reported by Lithuanian students (girls 21%, boys 26%). In Malta and Poland, a much smaller percentage confirmed being a victim of such violence.

Table 39 15-year-olds who have been bullied at school at least twice in the past couple of months (HBSC 2018) (%)

15-year-olds who have.....	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
been bullied at school at least twice in the past couple of months	5	7	21	26	4	7	8	8

Cyberbullying has become a severe form of peer violence. In the HBSC 2018 survey, it was defined as sending mean text messages, writing offensive posts on electronic messengers, and publishing and/or sharing photos and videos online without permission. The results presented in Table 40 show what percentage of young people have experienced such actions from their peers at least once in the past couple of months.

Table 40 15-year-olds who have been cyberbullied at least once in the past couple of months (HBSC 2018) (%)

15-year-olds who have...	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
been cyberbullied at least once in the past couple of months	20	20	16	29	9	12	13	12

4. Electronic media environment

Instant messaging and electronic media have become a common attribute of interpersonal relationships, especially among teenagers.

Polish data indicate a definitely increasing prevalence of Internet use among young people. The Teenagers 3.0 (Nastolatki 3.0) survey has found that only 0.7% of respondents never use the Internet (Tanaś, M., Kamieniecki, W., Bochenek, M. et al.)

The most important trend, indicated by another Polish survey, EU Kids Online 2018 (Pyżalski J., Zdrodowska A., Tomczyk Ł., Abramczyk K.), is the growing role of mobile devices, which for some young people are becoming the key devices for connecting to the Internet (young people practically do not use fixed Internet). Mobile Internet connectivity translates into the fact that we now have multiple ways of being online, woven into a range of activities undertaken.

a. Intense electronic communication with other people

The HBSC 2018 survey collected information on the intensity of young people’s staying online with other people. The array of responses included options from ‘never’ to ‘almost all the time throughout the day’. In this survey, 15-year-olds were classified as intense users of electronic media communication if they communicated online with others daily almost all the time throughout the day.

The results presented in Table 41 show what percentage of 15-year-old teenagers report intense electronic contact (almost all the time throughout the day) with other people.

Table 41 15-year-olds who report intense electronic media communication by gender (HBSC 2018) (%)

Intense electronic communication in	Girls	Boys
Poland	56	41
Lithuania	50	38
Malta	49	42
HBSC 2018 average	16	17

b. Addressees of electronic communication

The results of the above-mentioned survey also show with whom 15-year-olds most frequently have such intense contact. The results presented in Table 42 show what percentage of the surveyed adolescents were in contact with which groups of people almost all the time throughout the day.

Table 42 Intense electronic communication (almost all the time throughout the day) by gender (HBSC 2018) (%)

Intense electronic communication with	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
close friends	50	34	42	31	44	32	40	31
larger friendship group	15	18	12	16	11	18	14	16
friends met online	17	12	8	12	7	10	10	11
people other than friends	13	15	15	13	14	20	16	16

c. Preference for online communication in personal matters

HBSC 2018 researchers considered online contact to be preferred when young people declared that they found it easier to talk about feelings, concerns and secrets on social media than in direct contact. The survey results show that a quarter of the students prefer such contact in personal matters. Young people were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with three statements regarding their preference for online communication about personal problems, feelings and concerns.

The results presented in Table 43 show the percentages of 15-year-olds who strongly prefer online communication.

Table 43 15-year-olds with strong preference for online communication by gender (HBSC 2018) (%)

Electronic media communication	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		HBSC 2018 average	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
15-year-olds who have a strong preference for online communication	22	25	15	17	10	18	16	17

In Poland, one in four teenagers strongly prefers online communication with other people. In Lithuania and Malta, the percentages of 15-year-olds with such a strong preference are lower, below 20%.

5. Availability of psychoactive substances as perceived by 15-year-olds in their environment

The risk behaviours of adolescents related to the use of various psychoactive substances to some extent depends on the availability of these substances in the environment in which the adolescents live.

From the results of the ESPAD 2019 survey presented in Table 44, we can learn the percentages of 15-year-old students who believe that certain psychoactive substances are 'fairly easy' or 'very easy' to get in the countries where they live.

Table 44 Availability of substances as perceived by 15-year-olds by country and by gender (ESPAD 2019) (%)

Perceived availability of substance as fairly easy and very easy	Poland		Lithuania		Malta		ESPAD 2019 average	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
cigarettes	72	72	56	60	57	57	61	59
alcohol	76	81	55	66	82	88	77	79
cannabis	36	35	24	24	32	34	34	30
ecstasy	15	16	14	17	14	16	14	14

The results show that alcohol is readily available to the vast majority of adolescents in Poland, Lithuania and Malta. Most teenagers say they have easy access to cigarettes. One in four teenage girls and boys in Lithuania believe it is easy to get cannabis, and so do one in three teenagers in Poland and Malta. The fewest 15-year-olds in each of the three countries believe that a drug such as ecstasy is easily available.

V. Recommendations

The results of the two surveys analysed here show that *in all the partner countries, due to the large scale of risk behaviours, such as drinking alcohol and various forms of intense electronic media use*, there is a need for integrated prevention oriented towards younger adolescents.

The results of both surveys presented here show that *the Archipelago of Treasures prevention programme requires* two perspectives to be explicitly considered *in each of*

the partner countries: a girls' and boys' perspective, with respect to such problem behaviours as:

- a. spending over 5 hours on social media among girls
- b. reduced mental well-being significantly more frequent among girls than boys
- c. intense computer game playing and gambling among boys
- d. sexual activity among boys, more frequent than among girls

The results of both surveys analysed here also show ***differences in the partner countries as to risk behaviours occurring among 15-year-olds.*** Accordingly, for example:

- a. In Lithuania, the programme requires emphasizing and/or expanding the preventive content referring to risks related to:
 - drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, both by boys and girls,
 - intense computer game playing by boys,
 - boys' sexual activity.
- b. In Malta, the programme requires emphasizing and expanding the preventive content referring to such risk behaviours as:
 - alcohol consumption, both by girls and boys
 - boys' sexual activity

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