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# Overview

## Invisible elephant

## Quality level

Quality level : 1

## Executive summary

The "Invisible Elephant" project involves prevention and early diagnosis of alcohol and psychotropic substance consumption and abuse, organized by the SerT (Public Service for Drug Addiction) ASL 9 of Caluso (TURIN). The project is connected to the diagnostic, rehabilitative treatment and low-threshold contact interventions of the SerT.

Type of intervention	prevention
Sub-area	universal
Setting	school,community (including i.e.user scene)
Type of approach	
Target group (universal)	children/young people
Age group	14-25
Target group (specific)	children/young people
Annual coverage	
Substances addressed	tobacco,cannabis,alcohol,ecstasy,cocaine and derivatives,amphetamines
Evaluation type	outcome evaluation (how far are the specific objectives achieved),process evaluation (how far are the operational objectives achieved)
Country	Italy
Start date	01/09/2004
End date	

## **Overall objective**

The objective of the project is to develop in young people in the territory an informed, aware and critical approach to the problem of the use of psychotropic substances, of alcohol abuse and of the risks of developing forms of dependence on legal and illegal substances.

## **Abstract**

The "Invisible Elephant" project involves prevention and early diagnosis of alcohol and psychotropic substance consumption and abuse, organized by the SerT (Public Service for Drug Addiction) ASL 9 of Caluso (TURIN). The project is connected to the diagnostic, rehabilitative treatment and low-threshold contact interventions of the SerT. The project, begun 10 years ago as an informal collaboration between the SerT and the Ubertini Institute (Scuola Agraria Enologica), was progressively extended to other high schools, educational agencies and local agencies in the territory. Five years ago a team of dedicated operators was instituted (a psychologist, an educator, an organizer and a physician), and the intervention was extended to involve new high schools and middle schools in the territory. The territory in which the project is carried out has urban, rural and mountain areas, with 108 municipalities and around 188,000 inhabitants. The territory of the ASL 9 of Caluso (TO) is characterized by the production of alcoholic beverages (white wine, Erbaluce sparkling wine and raisin wine). This production permeates the social-cultural context and represents a rooted tradition in the uses and consumption of the entire population (home production of wine, dozens of wine production companies, a high school for wine production, celebrations for local feast days, the grape harvest and conscripted soldiers ritually accompanied by collective and acclaimed alcohol abuse, abusive behaviors which are widely tolerated, if not "suggested, by the social and family context. The youth culture of alcohol abuse brings the style of alcohol consumption as a habitual activity not criticized within the family or the typical social setting of the area together with the seeking out of transgression and excess typical of the age group.

## **Context and theory**

### **Initial situation**

Local Health Agency 9 (ASL 9) was founded in January 1999. The territory covered by the project has urban, rural and mountain areas, including 108 municipalities for a total of 188,000 inhabitants. There are many adolescent and young subjects who use psychotropic substances found here. Being an area of wine production, there is a youth culture of alcohol abuse that brings the style of alcohol consumption as a habitual practice not typically criticized by the family or society together with the transgression and excess typical of the age group. In the individual towns and cities, there are groups of young people involved in substance abuse, closed in a restricted socialization that is nearly inaccessible to the adult world. There are difficulties in going from one town to another due to the lack of public transport, which paradoxically is combined with a high level of commuting among young people going to school, who find in the schools therefore the most important opportunities for coming together. There is a fair range of employment opportunities, which are tied mostly to agriculture, artisan work and small family businesses, which, however, is linked to a situation of pockets of irregular and unregulated under-employment, where one can find an absolute lack of employment security and a high level of marginalization. The voluntary social network is not extensive, while a network among the agencies active for young people is being constructed. In the

territory covered by the SerT of Caluso site, a prevention project is active which began 10 years ago as an informal collaboration between the Addiction Service and a middle/high school in the territory, the Istituto Agrario Enologico Ubertini. In the following years, the collaboration experience was progressively extended to other high schools, educational agencies and public bodies in the territory. Five years ago a structured prevention project was set out and a team of dedicated operators was instituted (a psychol

## **Basic assumptions/theory**

The reflections on preventive intervention in the field of addiction at the national and international levels highlight the importance of addressing the risk factors and strengthening preventive factors. In line with these concepts, the project is seen as a way to involve young people in an active way, to strengthen horizontal communication and promote clear, correct and in-depth information. The project is an organic part of the overall activity of the Public Service for Drug Addiction, it is linked to the diagnostic, treatment and rehabilitation interventions that this Service provides and low-threshold contact and prevention activities, all in a context of wide-ranging prevention. The assumption is thus established of the need for a close relationship between the prevention agency and the diagnostic and treatment service, which guarantees the real-time exchange of information between the two, the accessibility of the service, and the implementation of interventions that do not come to nothing, creating illusory expectations, but rather that connect the problems dealt with to responses that can be built in a suitable and local context. In line with the international considerations (2nd National Conference on Drug Abuse Prevention Washington D.C. August 9-10 2001), we emphasize the opportunity to construct the preventive intervention not as an isolated action, destined thus to have a reduced impact, but as a complex of separate actions that are part of an effort to involve the different actors present in the social community, with the view of bringing a gradual developmental change to the widespread cultural models. The different types of action are developed in the local community, at the micro and macro-levels, as jointly produced by the Drug Addiction Service, the private social sphere and the educational institutions with the goal of developing an informed, aware culture that is critical towards abusive behaviors.

## **Objectives and indicators**

### **Process evaluation**

### **Operational objectives**

To create spaces in the schools and in the territorial realities for individual interviews aimed at prevention and the early diagnosis of abusive behaviors already in place. To develop a stable project in the middle and high schools that guarantees access for the target subjects to clear and correct information/training regarding the problems of alcohol abuse and the use of psychotropic substances. To operate in a network between the Services and the Educational Agencies in the territory for the prevention of the phenomenon of addiction to psychotropic drugs and to share models for individual programs, with attention paid to critical areas and the direction of the intervention.

### **Process indicators**

To implement early diagnostic interviews with consumers of psychotropic substances, including through informal counseling offices

To hold of planned encounters with the identified classes, verification meetings for operators and teachers To activate teachers in the design of program To create creation of informative materials To facilitate the coming into timely contact of operators and adolescent and young consumers of psychotropic substances.

To expand the network of collaboration with the territorial service, with entities from various contexts that deal with adolescents and young people

## **Instruments used**

**Type of quantitative instrument**

**Type of evaluation carried out**

**Specific objectives and outcome indicators**

**Specific objective 1**

**Outcome indicator 1**

To improve the information on the phenomenon (a comparison of questionnaires filled out at the beginning and at the end, with growth in awareness for 50%)

**Specific objective 2**

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**Outcome indicator 2**

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**Specific objective 3**

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**Outcome indicator 3**

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## **Instruments used**

**Type of quantitative instrument**

## **Type of qualitative instrument**

# **Action**

counselling, alternatives to drugs, information

# **Results**

## **Process evaluation**

### **Results**

In the high schools in the territory that are involved one finds: - the reaching of 480 students with prevention interventions - the formation of a stable group of young people involved in peer-education activities with the younger classes - the exportation by a group of students of the high school of the materials produced and of the messages learned in dealing with young students from the middle school - the recognition of the activities in the prevention project carried out by the students as educational credit by the scholastic institution - the active participation of around 20 teachers in the creation of the activity and their participation in the final day of summary and extension, including a "party" with the students, with numerous interventions to express recognition for the skills developed by the young people involved in the activity - in the middle schools there has been seen a constant increase in participation by teachers and schools in the realization of the project. The reaching of 550 young people and adults in gatherings across the territory with prevention interventions - The implementation of 8 interventions for counselling and orientation for teachers with regard to problematic students considered by the teachers to be at risk of abuse and addiction involving legal or illegal psychotropic substances. The territorial development of the area involved in the project, going from 18 municipalities initially to the current 22 ? Direct intervention, with concrete contributions from new local public agencies and from private social agencies ? Connections to other new initiatives in the prevention sector, developed by different agencies but carried out in synergy. Overall the project has resulted in: ? The development of a culture of awareness of the risks connected to the consumption of alcohol in the community in the local administrations and in the wine production sites ? The development of the work of the network of services and agen

## **References**

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# **Contact**

Responsible organisation ASL 9 Sert Caluso

Name of organisation ASL 9 Sert Caluso

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Postal code 10014

City	Caluso
Country	Italy
Website	
Email	resp.sert.cal@asl.ivrea.to.it
Partner organisation(s)	Municipalities in the territory middle/high schools in the territory
Contact	Delsedime Isabella
Name of contact	Delsedime Isabella
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## Additional information

Number of staff involved	
Status/profession of staff involved	Trainers, Educators, Psychologist, Animators, Medical doctors, Volunteers.
Type of evaluator	Internal evaluator
Name of external institution(s)	Dott. Riccardo Conte
Full reference to evaluation report	

## Budget

Annual budget	Up to 100 000
Sources of funding	International organisations (operates in more than one country),Local authorities,Regional authorities
Percentage from each source	International organisations (operates in more than one country)=73%,Local authorities=25%,Regional authorities=2%

## Additional remarks

The methodology and style of approach of the Invisible Elephant is: . an alternative to interventions that see young people only as users and adults in an active position: it works to attain the direct involvement of the interested parties through the construction of a shared awareness, the spreading of information horizontally and the combining of research and intervention . flexible with respect to the individual subjects. The action takes place in different situations, in institutions such as schools, informally at concerts and spontaneous meeting places. According to the context, the project allows for "made to order" proposals . oriented towards bringing to light the problematic aspects usually hidden away and not spoken of, to develop analysis, critical reflection and personal exchange . directly connected to the diagnostic and treatment service to guarantee timely access and the real-time exchange of information between the two contexts The project has three objectives: . To develop in the schools of the territory a stable project that guarantees the target subjects access to clear and correct information/education on the abuse of alcohol and psychotropic substances. . To

create spaces within the schools and the territory for individual interviews aimed at the prevention and early diagnosis of abusive behaviors. . To operate in a network with Services and Educational Agencies for the prevention of the phenomenon of addiction to psychotropic substances The project has progressively developed differentiated working methods for the specific targets (pre-adolescent, adolescent, young adult, occasional or habitual consumers, subjects affected by addiction in the family). Individual and group settings, cross-disciplinary workshops, and interventions with class groups are used. The level of school-based work is supported by the level of community-based work, which guarantees its effectiveness and development.