

What would be the role of a “Psychological disturbances Referent” within Vocational and Education Training centres? With the Covid-19 pandemic, this question raises special interest. During the past year, the VET sector, along with many others, has been living significant changes: the majority of learners attending online courses, trainers having to adapt their role, families having to juggle with their work, everyday life and education, ...

The limited contacts and restriction of social activities definitely increased anxiety, stress and depression-like troubles. More and more voices are being heard, sounding the alarm about mental health of citizens and urging authorities to take it into account when managing the situation. In 2017, when the project was just being drafted, no one would have dared to say that the issue it was addressing was going to be at the heart of everybody's concern three years later.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, VET field professionals had no choice but to improvise in order to support their learners remotely. Doing so, they definitely mastered new skills and new supporting techniques. When life will – hopefully – go back to normal, it could be useful to capitalise on these new learnings to better support learners living with psychological disturbances, whether they were pre-existing or due to the pandemic.

The learnings and developments of Psych Up can therefore be very useful and relevant, as the project objective is to draw up and clarify the support function for these particular learners.

We are not sufficiently trained to correctly identify and work with these disturbances. But when trust is established, sometimes trainees prefer to open themselves to us, work with us on their problems despite the lack of pedagogical, psychological and technical means we face.” (Belgian trainer interviewed for the project in 2019)

Initially, this was done by drawing up a function profile determining the key activities and skills of the "Referent for psychological disturbances" (or *Psych Up Referent*). 3 key activities (KA) were defined in the Psych Up Function Profile, that each encompass several competences:

KA1/ Welcome and support students/trainees concerned by psychological disturbances all along their educational/training path

KA 2/ Develop a network of partners on their territory

KA 3/ Inform and raise awareness among the teaching/training staff

Based on this function profile, a training profile for the Psych Up Referent that was developed. This resource sets up the training and competences the Psych Up Referent should follow and acquire in order to carry out their function.

The daily work of VET professionals already requires them to mobilise a range of diverse, flexible and polyvalent skills. The health crisis and its long-term impact on the mental health of learners will undoubtedly require even more versatility and expertise, particularly in mental health management. The training frame can help, by highlighting the training

programme to be followed by a person occupying the functions (in whole or in part) of a Psych Up Referent.

The training frame consists of 2 learning outcomes units:

1. To welcome and support people living with psychological disturbances all along their education/training path, as well as the teaching/training staff

By the end of the unit, the Psych up Referent will be able to:

- Support the learner in every step of their training path
- Support the learner in identifying the mechanisms for dealing with their psychosocial challenges
- Ensure effective monitoring on the psychological disturbances
- Develop an inclusion policy among the training staff

2. To develop a network of partners on their territory and lead the people living with psychological disturbances towards the partners

By the end of the unit, the Psych up Referent will be able to:

- Develop partnership relations with local actors
- Build an inclusion policy within partners and communicate about it
- Guide and orientate learners towards the appropriate partners (psycho-social services, medical centres, ...)

Both the function profile and, especially, the training frame can be useful for field actors:

- It can be used by the Psych Up Referent as a training plan, to plan and get appropriate training in order to acquire new skills and knowledge useful for their everyday work
- It can be used as a reference for training providers, to organise training programs and modules destined to Psych Up Referent (and other similar functions).
- It can be helpful for the Psych Up Referent employer as a recruitment guide, to hire candidates presenting relevant past experience and education for the Psych Up Referent job.

If you want to know more, join us on our platforms on [LinkedIn](#) and [Epale](#) to get access to the full function and training profiles. Both resources will shortly be available not only in English, but also in French, Spanish, Italian, Greek and Bulgarian.

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