NPO-PLAN

PROMOTING STUDENT WELLBEING ON INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

June 2021

EUR Program Student Wellbeing

Contents

NPO plan to promote Student Wellbeing on EUR Institutional level

1. Introduction

Although 60 percent of the surveyed EUR students feel satisfied with their life and 70 percent feel at home at their University, between 50 to 70 percent of the students do suffer from higher than normal stress, anxiety and depression levels and severe loneliness. This is the outcome of the first EUR Student Wellbeing Monitor in which around 10% of the EUR students participated (EUR monitor Student Wellbeing, 2021). The survey was launched in December 2020 to capture a snapshot of students' general health, wellbeing and academic success.

Given the critical monitor results, the Executive Board decided to invest NPO budget in additional fruitful plans to reinforce student wellbeing. Extra measures had already been taken with respect to student wellbeing in the context of HEQA i.e. a student wellbeing e-platform, campaign weeks to raise awareness on student wellbeing and the current monitor. At institutional EUR level, too, attention is being paid to student wellbeing. Both, the student wellbeing projects of NPO and HEQA contribute to the building of an effective chain of support for EUR students. Figure 1 shows the chain of support.

Figure 1 *The six pillars of a comprehensive program Student Wellbeing (EUR Vision on Student Wellbeing, Matthijsse 2019).*

Pillars 2 to 5 refer to the chain of care including *Prevention* (promoting resiliency and coping skills, sense of belonging and community), *Detection* (of high stress and mental health problems), *Timely intervention* (by staff and low-threshold interventions), *Support* (by services on faculty and institutional level) and *Referral to external services* if needed (e.g. general practitioner or mental health care service).

Especially pillar 2 (prevention) is targeted on promoting mental health and personal professional growth. Students are encouraged to care for their well-being and personal professional development by actively providing them with evidence-based tools and activities.

In response to the monitor results, students and staff of all faculties and the student support service have systematically discussed in focus groups ways to enhance student wellbeing (Report EUR Focus Groups, 2021). The results have been fed back to the faculties and the student support service. Based on these the faculties set up NPO-plans targeting student wellbeing on faculty level, and the EUR Program team Student Wellbeing made recommendations and plans on institutional level. Both parties shared their plans. In June 2021 the proposed NPO-actions at faculty and institutional level have been discussed in a co-design session with the faculties. Furthermore, a co-design session has been performed with the student support service. The co-design sessions resulted in a list of broad supported actions reinforcing outreach and community building (pillar 2) and support (pillar 4). The plans at institutional and faculty level (e.g. deployment of extra mentors and tutors) complement each other as well as the HEQA plans on Student Wellbeing.

In de next chapters, this NPO project plan elaborates on the actions at institutional level that are based on the trajectory described before:

Support for students (section 2.1):
- Additional formation of student psychologists and student counselors
- Additional formation to support student organizations
- Joining Caring Universities for students who experience mental health problems

Support for staff (2.2):
– Inter-university alignment regarding a training offer for staff (teachers and study advisors)

Outreach (section 2.3):
- Setting up a central, physical information point to reinforce wellbeing and personal development

Community building (section 2.4):
- Joining the Unilife-life app to enhance social contacts and cohesion among students within and across faculties

2. Actions on institutional level

In this chapter the project description, the goals and the outcome of the beforementioned actions will be described. Appendix 1 contains the budget plan. All projects will incorporate the experiences and advices of students via student panels and all projects will closely align with the communication strategy of faculties and student support service in order to maximize the student reach.

2.1 Support

2.1.1 Additional formation Student psychologists and Student counselors

Project description

This project aims to increase the staffing level of both student psychologists and student counselors. The need for more student counsellors is not always obvious for everyone, but it is equally import in the context of student wellbeing. We have seen this not only in the important role of the student counselors during the Covid lockdown (i.e. Emergency fund) but also in the light of the large number of international students. The assistance they request necessitates intensive and/or adjusted (compared to current) services also from the counselors - the MoMi procedure (modern migration policy); severe financial problems they experience more often than other students. It is important that international students are quickly able to contact the student counsellors and that they are aware that their situation is something that can be addressed by the assistance provided. This way, these students will not delay (due to their cultural background, for example) asking for assistance (something that only increases the complexity and the workload).

Goals

This project aims to bring the staffing level of the student support in line with the actual (international) student population and changed scope of the type of assistance requested (FTE and expertise). (EUR memo, 2021)

Comprehensive student support can only be provided when staffing levels are up to strength. Similarly, only then can efforts be made in the areas of innovation, professional development and provision of information. The aim is also to reduce the waiting time for an intake from max 20 to max 10 working days.

Outcome

The goals described above can only successfully be reached in close cooperation with the Student Wellbeing Program. When increasing staffing, it is important to retain a certain degree of flexibility with regard to exactly how the FTEs will be apportioned to the two areas of expertise (student counsellors and university psychologists). This will make it possible to adapt to any future changes in

circumstances. Finally, it is important that the staff is in line with the diversity of the student population.

2.1.2 Additional formation to support student organizations

Project description
This project aims at structurally shaping support for student organizations within E&S. The student organizations are an important part of student life and the academic community. They also play an important role when it comes to student well-being, combating loneliness and binding students to the city of Rotterdam. The importance of a good relationship between the organizations and the university is therefore obvious. In recent years, the number of student organizations at EUR has grown considerably (there are currently 90 organizations in the field of socializing, culture, sports and study). In addition, the organizations are socially under a magnifying glass and there is a lot of demand in the context of cultural changes. The university also plays an important role in this.

Based on responses from the student population and among the various student organizations, it appears that there is a need to actively and structurally support the organizations within EUR. The University Council has therefore requested the Executive Board to appoint a contact person for student organizations within EUR, following the example of other universities.

Goals
The aim is to appoint someone for 0.5 FTE within E&S by 1 January 2022 at the latest.

Outcome
This newly appointed contact person will in any case perform the following tasks:
- Regular contact with student organizations and umbrella organizations
- Stimulating and facilitating events for and with different organizations
- Support of the higher education committee student social associations around the hazing
- Organizing support for board members
- First-line contact regarding the code of conduct and the diversity and sustainability goals of the student organizations

The intention is to supplement this function - based on the current budgets and services of E&S - by stimulating community building (more interaction between international students and the student organizations) and guiding the Eurekaweek board into the function of *Student Community Liaison.*

2.1.3 Joining Caring Universities for students who experience mental health problems

Project description
This project aims at joining the Caring Universities (CU) consortium and thus get access to the CU intervention for EUR-students who experience mental health problems. The reason for this project is twofold: (a) the critical results of the Student Wellbeing monitor indicating a high proportion of students experiencing stress and mental health problems which was confirmed by the focus groups at faculties and (b) the advice of the U-council to the Executive Board to join the CU consortium to promote inter-university collaboration on student wellbeing resulting in cost-efficiency (Monitor Student Wellbeing, 2021; Focus Group report, 2021; U-council letter to the EB, March 4, 2021).
In the pursuit of EUR to build an effective chain of support for students (figure 1, page xx) that the CU intervention can contribute to, EUR has contacted CU. The conclusion of the meetings between EUR and CU-consortium partners was that EUR can join the consortium for knowledge exchange and further development of CU and can get access to the CU- intervention (Dutch and English version) for

EUR students. Active participation in the consortium and the access to the intervention are inextricably linked.

The CU consortium consists of the Vrije University of Amsterdam (VU), University of Utrecht (UU), University of Maastricht and Leiden University. The current CU offer is embedded within the World Health Organization college student mental health survey (WHM-ICS) led by Prof. Dr. Ronald Kessler (Harvard Medical School) and distributed across 16 countries, providing us with a worldwide view on students' wellbeing and creating a benchmark for universities. In addition to the survey, the CU program provides respondents with feedback on their survey scores and subsequent advice to sign up to one of the included intervention modules that are being further developed (currently: mood, stress, procrastination and COVID-19 related issues), with the support of online coaching provided by trained clinical psychology students enrolled across the universities.

The full CU program was launched in June 2020 as a pilot. The survey was completed by a first cohort of 8.349 students (9.6% of the invited students) in June 2020 and by a second one of 10.983 in January 2021 across the four universities. Almost all respondents asked to receive feedback on their scores and 9400 (48.7%) received the advice to continue with the indicated intervention modules. Students with a high level of symptoms are being referred to other services. As of today, 1.465 students activated an account (7.6% of the total amount of the survey respondents and 15.6% of advised students), of whom 1.308 started with a module and 504 (2.6% of the total amount of the survey respondents) completing post-intervention assessments. The procrastination module has been visited the most (70% of completed lessons). The CU consortium strives to increase the outreach of students with more PR and stimulating engagement. Furthermore, the consortium wants to scale up and further develop CU so that it includes not only (indicated) prevention for students with an elevated level of mental health problems targeting specific problems, but also (universal) prevention for all students to strengthen their resiliency and coping skills.

Goals
Main goal
Improving the chain of care for EUR students by joining the Caring Universities consortium that provides:
— Access to evidence-based indicated prevention for students with elevated levels of mental health complaints.
— Joint knowledge building on promoting student wellbeing [1]
Subgoals
— Creating access to the Caring Universities intervention for EUR students via the Wellbeing platform 'Are you ok?'
— Evaluating the effects of the CU-offer among EUR students [1]

[1]Joint knowledge building and evaluating the effects are not part of this NPO-plan, however are included in a HEQA project. The current project plan focusses on realizing the access of the CU-intervention to EUR students.

Outcome
— Making a page on the EUR-Wellbeing platform including a link to the CU-intervention
— Implementing CU in the chain of support (e.g. including CU in charters for study advisors)
— Promoting CU among EUR-students, study advisors and student support service
KPI's
— August 2021 at the latest the agreement EUR-CU has been set up and signed
— As of Sept 2021: CU is available for EUR-students and a PR-campaign has started and continued throughout the year

- Sept 2022: the CU survey is completed by 3000 students (10%) and all of them received feedback based on their personal scores. 1500 of them (50%) get an advice to follow the CU-intervention. 450 (30%) of them completed a CU-intervention.
- As of 2022 the CU-survey is completed by an increasing rate of students (15% of EUR-students) and an increasing rate of students that get advice to follow the CU-intervention complete a CU-intervention (35%).

2.2 Support for staff

2.2.1 Inter-university alignment regarding a training offer for staff

Project description

The EUR will align with other universities on a framework for a training offer for teachers, tutors, mentors and study advisors focused on reinforcing student wellbeing and personal professional development. The training offer supports the transition of the focus on study success to student success. The training will be included in the BKO and can be tailor made for universities and faculties. The tailored version is for lecturers who did already a BKO-training and for tutors and mentors who do not attend BKO-trainings. The tailored version and the implementation of it are part of a HEQA project in the program Student Wellbeing and is not included in the KPI's below.

Goal

- To align with and set up a national supported framework for trainings of staff-members of universities focused on promoting student wellbeing and personal professional development, and thus student success. To this end, EUR will collaborate with other universities in the context of the common NPO-part of universities.

Outcome

- Attending meetings with other universities to set up a framework.

KPI's

- End of 2021: delivering of a framework for trainings for the target groups mentioned above[1].
- End of 2022: the training will be part of BKO.

[1] The further development and implementing of the staff training is part of a HEQA project in the program Student Wellbeing and will be in place spring 2021-2022.

2.3 Outreach

2.3.1 Central, physical information point on wellbeing and personal professional development

Project description

This project aims at setting up and running a central information point at the EUR campus focused on student wellbeing *and* personal professional development (figure 1, prevention pillar). Nearly all focus groups indicated that information on support services are difficult to find and that it is not clear enough for what questions and problems concerning wellbeing you can reach out to which service (Report EUR Focus groups, 2021). This hampers the timely seeking for help. Other known barriers to seek help are fear for stigmatization and underestimating the impact of mental health problems (Vanheusden 2008, Salaheddin 2016, Dopmeijer 2020). A study among students of the Erasmus School of Economics demonstrated that a significant percentage of students with an elevated rate of mental health problems do not seek for help (Acampora 2021). In general, studies among young adults show that they are more likely to experience mental health problems than other age groups and that at the same time there is a large gap between their needing help and receiving it (Aguirre

Velasco 2020, Vanheusden 2008). The consequences are serious: mental health problems in students are related to lower academic achievements and study delay and the drop out without attaining a degree is twice as high among them as among other students (Eisenberg 2009, Zivin 2009, Deroma 2009, McLafferty 2017, Bruffaerts 2018, Hartley 2010). This way, mental health problems can also have serious implications for the socioeconomic position the person can achieve in life.

The focus groups called for a clear information structure and communication about wellbeing and support services. In this project a central, low-threshold information point will be set up on campus where students can go to for information, questions and support related to wellbeing *and* personal professional development. The center is staffed with trained students and professionals who have a broad overview of what EUR and its student support service and faculties offer on personal professional development and wellbeing and know how to refer to it. The information point is not only aimed at referring students to the appropriate service, which is a crucial function, it is also a sparkling center that stimulates and supports students to make tailor made plans for their personal professional development and wellbeing. By broadening the scope from 'information point for support services in case of mental health problems' to a point for 'wellbeing and personal professional development', the fear for stigmatization will decrease which lowers the threshold to visit the information point. Moreover, the information point supports the desired transition in focus as university from study success to student success. Crucial to this project is good alignment of the central information point with the (offer of) faculties on wellbeing and personal professional development and with the student support service.

The equivalent, an online information point, has already been developed: the wellbeing platform 'Are you ok out there? This platform will be restructured and redesigned and the content will be renewed to better meet the needs of students and complement the physical information point. The online information point is part of a HEQA project. The physical information point will be co-created by the EUR program Student Wellbeing and LifeVersity, an EUR initiative that is focused on delivering high quality, engaging courses to strengthen the 21st century soft-skills (such as leadership, public speaking, communication, time management, coping with stress etc.) at the campus and in the online CANVAS environment. https://www.lifeversity.nl/ .

Goals
− Providing clear, engaging and easily accessible information to students on how they can take care of their wellbeing, where they can find appropriate support and how they can strengthen their personal professional development. This goal will be realized by setting up and running a central information point on campus including campaigns around it, focused on wellbeing and personal professional development.

Outcome
− Strong alignment with faculties and student support service
− Elaborated project- and work plan in collaboration with LifeVersity
− Alignment with (offer of) student support service and all faculties
− Recruitment of the staffing (coordinator, student and professional)
− Training of the staffing
− Arranging Pop-up facilities with slogans etc. and campaigns
− Selected location (e.g. Erasmus Paviljoen)
− Embedding info point in chain of care (and pr-activities around it)
KPI's (condition: EUR campus is open)
− Dec 2021: realization of mobile Pop up's on campus and campaign
− Dec 2021: physical location contracted and basic device ready
− Dec 2021: trained staff on location

- Dec 2021: online wellbeing platform aligned with physical info point
- June 2022: info point is known by 20% of students and staff; satisfaction: 6 (scale 0-10)
- Dec 2022: info point is known by 40% of students and staff; satisfaction: 7 (scale 0-10)
- June 2023: info point is known by 60% of students and staff; satisfaction: 7 or higher
- Dec 2023: info point is known by 80% of students and staff; satisfaction: 7 or higher

2.4 Community building

2.4.1 Joining the Unilife app

Project description
An effective, comprehensive student wellbeing program contains a prevention pillar that reduces the chance of developing problems in students (figure 1). This project aims at strengthening the cohesion between students by facilitation of social contacts. The results of the Monitor Student Wellbeing indicated a lot of students experiencing severe loneliness and the focus groups at the faculties demonstrated a need for social connection and cohesion between students on faculty level and EUR wide (EUR Monitor Student Wellbeing 2021; Focus group report 2021). Sense of belonging promotes the wellbeing, personal development and ultimately the student success (Focus group report 2021; Dopmeijer 2020). The Unilife app can contribute to the enhancement of the sense of belonging alongside the other initiatives within the faculties. Unilife is an initiative of EUR-RSM alumni's who remarked that (a) information about social events was scattered over lots of platforms and difficult to find and (b) a huge number of flyers were used for the promotion of events. They solved the problems by developing the Unilife app, that collects all kinds of social events and activities EUR-wide and of student organizations. The events are included in an up-to-date overview on the app. Students can easily register for an activity via links in the app. EUR contracted Unilife till August 2021. Currently, over 8000 EUR students have a Unilife account and the EUR uses the Unilife app for e.g. promoting Student Wellbeing Weeks and other activities. Meanwhile, Unilife offers its service also to other universities.

Recently, the Unilife app has been expanded by an interesting new feature that enables students to create and join *meet ups* (where students can organize an easily accessible activity, e.g. studying together or playing a game) and *communities* around certain topics (here students can chat with each other in groups based on the same interests). This feature can be tailor made for students within a faculty and it can also be used for assignments by lecturers. The first evaluation among EUR-students was promising: in less than two weeks after the launch of this feature and without targeted promotion, 14 meet ups were organized with 54 EUR students and 10 communities were started with 15 EUR students and it is growing (Unilife data, 2021). Moreover, in less than two weeks, 157 EUR students registered for a 1 to 1 challenge organized by a student organization.

The Unilife app provides the overview on student activities and reinforces cohesion between students within and across faculties via the community feature. Moreover, it corresponds to the aim of the EUR to give students the opportunity to develop themselves not only academically, but also personal, including socially. Unilife provides a promising tool that can support this personal development, wellbeing and ultimately student success.

Goals
Main goal
- Promoting the wellbeing, personal development and ultimately student success by facilitating social contacts and strengthening the cohesion between students.
Sub goals
- Arranging continuous access to the Unilife-app for EUR students

- Evaluating the reach and satisfaction of the Unilife offer in collaboration with Unilife

Outcome
- Including the Unilife app on the wellbeing platform 'Are you ok?' and in the chain of prevention and care
- Promoting the Unilife app among students EUR-wide
- Introducing and promoting the Unilife app at the faculties, especially the possibilities of creating meet ups and communities at faculty level

KPI's
- Aug 2021 at the latest: continuation of the Unilife contract
- As of Aug 2021: continuous access to the Unilife app for EUR students
- As of Sept 2021: apart from EUR-wide also meet ups and communities on faculty level
- Dec 2022: 14.000 Unilife accounts of EUR students and 2000 students participating in meet ups and communities
- Dec 2022: delivery of an evaluation report on results of Unilife
- Dec 2023:16.000 Unilife accounts and 3000 students participating in meet ups and communities

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