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EMPOWERING YOUTH WORKERS TO SUPPORT YOUNG CARERS

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Young carers can be defined as children, teenagers and young adults who provide assistance or support to another family member, often a parent but also a sibling, grandparent or another relative who is disabled, has a chronic illness, mental health or addiction illness or other condition connected with a need for care, support or supervision. These young people carry out, often on a regular basis, significant or substantial caring tasks and assume a level of responsibility which would not usually be associated with their age group. Research has provided clear evidence that heavy caring responsibilities can result in decreased possibilities of a good education and

future employment opportunities, emotional difficulties, health problems, social exclusion and limited opportunities for social and leisure activities. Still professional support services are lacking in many EU countries and this is largely due to the fact that the youth work, educational and social services sectors are not aware of this group.

To support youth professionals in their difficult tasks to identify young carers, to assess their situation and to develop effective action plans, in August 2016 the European project "EPYC - Empowering Professionals to support Young Carers" has officially started.

The Erasmus+ funded project involves a strategic partnership of 6 European organisations, namely **Diakonisches Werk Berlin Stadtmitte e.V.** (DE), **Care Alliance Ireland** (IE), **Anziani e non solo** (IT), **Carers Trust** (UK), **Austrian Red Cross** (AT) and **IPS VERSARI MACRELLI** (IT) and will end in July 2018. The kick off meeting, hosted by the leading partner, Diakonisches Werk Berlin Stadtmitte e.V., was held in Berlin on the 12th of September 2016.

The EPYC project, targeting youth professionals working with young carers directly or indirectly in Austria, Germany, Ireland, Italy and Scotland, will develop a set of tools and interventions, together with the skills and capacities to use them, to support young carers. These tools will include questionnaires, motivational interviews, checklists, services navigators, etc. In addition, the creation of practical support services will be promoted through practical guidelines based on a model support project established by each partner in their region. The tools are intended to allow identification of young carers, to allow practitioners to assess the situation of young carers, including measuring the level and impact of the care burden, and to allow practitioners to develop an action plan to address issues adversely affecting young carers.



In the course of the project, intermediate expected results include an increased capacity of organizations to identify young carers, an increased knowledge of promising or successful experiences and practices from other European countries and an increased awareness of the challenges faced by young carers in the different local contexts involved directly or indirectly in project activities. The eventual desired outcome is the improved youth work expertise in this field and stakeholders in youth work having the knowledge to develop support services for young carers and cooperate with relevant sectors in education, social services and caregiver support.

For more information about the project and to subscribe to our newsletter visit the project website www.ep-yc.org or contact the coordinator: epyc@diakonie-stadtmitte.de.

www.ep-yc.org