



## ENERGE YOUTH

Unlocking Potential, One Breath at a Time

### Empowering the Next Generation of Entrepreneurs through Stress Management Education in Youth

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## Mental Health and Well-Being for Youth and NEETs in Europe

In 2026, young people across Europe continue to face a profound mental health challenge shaped by socioeconomic shifts, labour market disruption, global crises, and uneven access to health care. While mental well-being has become a more visible priority in policy and civil society, persistent gaps remain, especially for those outside education, employment, or training (NEETs), who are among the most vulnerable to psychological stress, social exclusion and long-term disadvantage.

### The State of Youth Mental Health in Europe

Recent data from the World Health Organization highlight a troubling trend: one in seven children and adolescents in the WHO European Region now lives with a mental health condition, a number that has risen sharply over the past decade (WHO, 2025). Young women in mid-adolescence are disproportionately affected, with approximately one in four girls aged 15–19 experiencing a mental health disorder. Suicide also remains the leading cause of death among 15- to 29-year-olds, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive mental health strategies tailored to young people.

Despite efforts by many European governments to expand mental health services, accessibility and quality vary widely. Rural youth, economically disadvantaged groups, young migrants, and NEETs face some of the most significant barriers to timely and appropriate support. Limited service availability, financial constraints, stigma, and poor digital connectivity often compound inequalities.

### Why NEETs Are at Higher Risk

NEETs are young people not in education, employment or training, who face unique pressures that compound usual developmental challenges. Multiple studies and regional data highlight the reality that:

- NEETs report much higher rates of depression and anxiety compared with peers engaged in work or education. One regional analysis showed that over half of NEETs were at risk of depression, with anxiety and loneliness significantly more common vs non-NEETs (OECD, 2024).
- Compared with non-NEET youth, NEETs also score much higher on stress and feelings of social isolation, placing them at greater risk for long-term mental health struggles and lower life satisfaction.

These patterns are fuelled by the uncertainty, loss of identity, lack of routine and social disconnectedness that often accompany prolonged disengagement from education and

employment. In 2026, addressing NEET mental health is increasingly recognised as both a public health priority and an economic necessity, given Europe's demographic shifts and workforce challenges.

## Why Stress Management Matters in 2026

Young people today face:

- Economic precarity
- High performance pressure
- Social media comparison culture
- Climate anxiety
- Uncertain career pathways

When unmanaged, these stressors can escalate into more serious mental health conditions. Building coping skills early is therefore not merely beneficial – it is preventative.

Initiatives such as EMERGE Youth recognise that mental well-being competencies should be taught and practised in the same way as academic or professional skills: systematically, openly, and without stigma.

## The EMERGE Youth Project: Innovation in Stress Management Support

The EMERGE Youth project plays a meaningful role in strengthening youth mental well-being across Europe, particularly by developing accessible tools that help young people manage stress effectively. Its primary outputs include:

### **1 EMERGE Stress Management EduPack**

A structured educational resource designed to support stress awareness, coping strategies and resilience-building skills. The EduPack can be used across youth work settings, training environments, and community initiatives, making stress-management education more widely accessible.

### **2 EMERGE Web App and Educators' Guide**

The EMERGE WebApp represents a significant step forward in digital youth mental health support. It provides young people—especially those hesitant to engage with formal services—with a practical, stigma-free platform to explore and strengthen their mental well-being.

The WebApp is designed to:

- Provide guided activities that help youth manage stress in healthy and practical ways
- Include interactive exercises, such as breathing techniques, journaling prompts, and creative challenges
- Feature real-life case studies from entrepreneurs across sectors including food, technology, fitness, and education, demonstrating how they successfully overcame stress in their professional journeys
- Encourage reflection and progress tracking, allowing young users to monitor their growth and development over time

By blending technology with community-oriented principles, the EMERGE WebApp aims to become a supportive entry point for young people, especially those who may feel hesitant to seek traditional mental health services.

## Reducing Barriers for NEET Youth

For NEETs in particular, digital tools like the EMERGE WebApp can lower some of the most persistent barriers to support, including:

- Stigma or fear of judgement
- Limited financial resources
- Geographic isolation
- Lack of confidence or readiness to seek formal services

When integrated into broader youth work programmes, these tools can enhance engagement, complement existing services, and support early intervention – an essential step in improving future outcomes for Europe’s most at-risk young people.

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