SAFE FUTURES

PROMISING APPROACHES, OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS FOR INTERVENTIONS TO PREVENT YOUTH RECRUITMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN EUROPEAN DRUGS MARKETS

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NEWSLETTER

Issue 2

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Research Evidence into Policy, Programmes and Practice (REPPP) University of Limerick

About Safe Futures

Safe Futures brings together policymakers, researchers, law enforcement agencies, and practitioners from across Europe to collaborate in a new Community of Practice focused on interventions to prevent Youth Recruitment and Participation in European Drug Markets.

Led by REPPP in the University of Limerick on behalf of the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA), this project is building on existing initiatives to inform and design future responses to the problem of young people's involvement in drug markets and drug-related criminal activities.

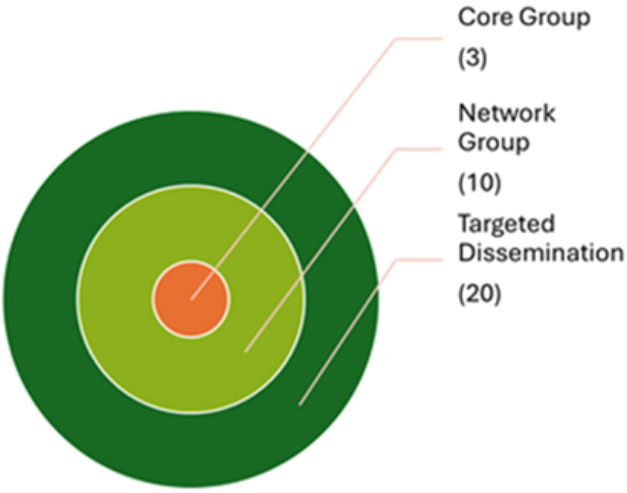
The overall purpose of the project is to establish a multi-disciplinary and jurisdictional network (policymakers, academics, practitioners, law enforcement) from 3-5 EU countries to support:

- A Desk Review of literature on interventions, evaluations etc
- Identification and review of existing examples of practices and interventions
- Identification of critical lessons learned, success factors and barriers to the development and implementation of interventions
- Development of a conceptual framework and model to inform the development and implementation of interventions
- Communication of the project findings to researchers and practitioners in this area.



Building a Community of Practice

An important objective of Safe Futures is to establish a multi-disciplinary and multi-jurisdictional community of practice focused on developing new approaches and interventions to target the recruitment and participation of young people in European Drugs Markets.



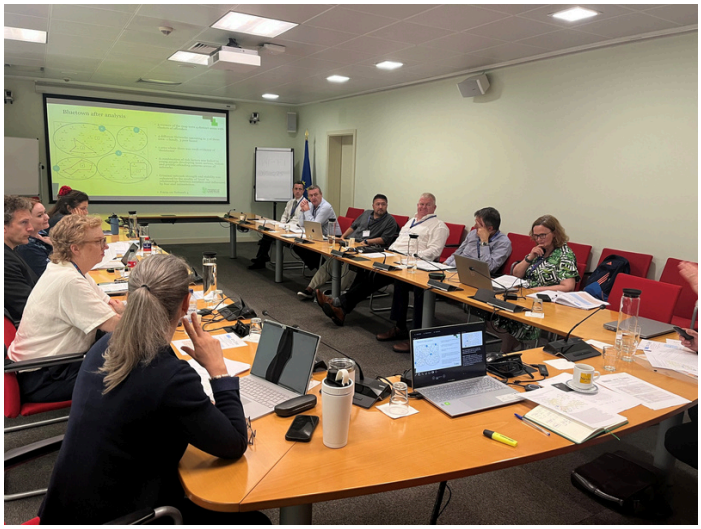
To support and lead this work, a Core Group representing partners from Ireland, Northern Ireland, Sweden, The Netherlands, and the EUDA has now been formed.

The Core Group members are:

Ireland	Helen Fitzgerald Dr Eoin O'Meara Daly Dr Catherine Naughton Dr Megan Ryan	Research Evidence into Policy Programmes and Practice, University of Limerick
-	Teodora Groshkova, PhD	European Union Drugs Agency
Sweden	Karin Svanberg	National Council for Crime Prevention
The Netherlands	Prof. Veroni Eichelsheim Prof. Arjan Blokland	Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement
Northern Ireland	Dr Colm Walsh	Queens University Belfast

Safe Futures Launch

The Safe Futures project was officially launched at a meeting of the Project Core Group Partners and guests in the offices of the EUDA in Lisbon on the 19th and 20th July.



The 2- day meeting brought together policymakers, academics, and law enforcement agencies from the Core Group member countries to discuss the challenges and opportunities for developing interventions for the prevention of recruitment of young people in European Drugs markets. The meeting provided a space for networking, relationship-building and exchange of knowledge and ideas.



Safe Futures Launch

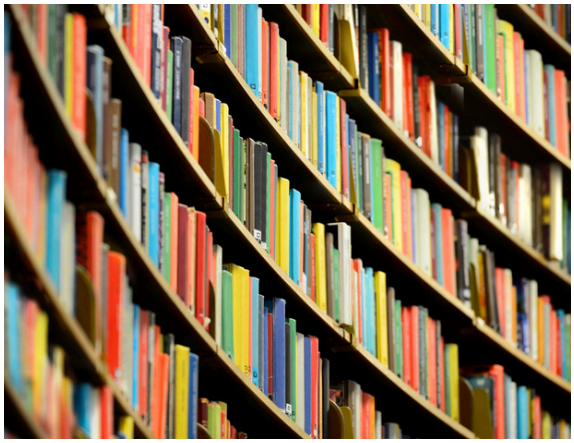
Day 1 commenced with a reflective discussion on the concept of a community of practice, highlighting the importance of sharing knowledge and expertise, as well as the different objectives, methods, restraints and priorities for sharing knowledge.



Over the remainder of the 2 days, attendees presented and discussed some of the research they have undertaken as well as the practice challenges they are grappling with. Attendees discussed learning from Ireland's Greentown Programme; the Netherland's Prevention with Authority Programme; the use of 'credible messengers' in The Netherlands; a relational youth work and hospital-based violence intervention programme in Northern Ireland; focused deterrence models and support; and the importance of sharing local and national experiences and insights across multiple jurisdictions.

Project Activities

Reviewing Literature



We are currently undertaking a Rapid Evidence Review of both academic and grey literature, focusing on new and innovative approaches to tackling the complex problem of young people's involvement in drugs markets and criminal networks.



Engaging with Stakeholders

Over the next 12 months, we will be reaching out to policy makers, practitioners, law enforcement agencies, and academics to learn about the innovative research and practice happening across Europe.

Communicating our Learning

We will continue to communicate and share learning from the project, with our first webinar scheduled for the Autumn. Further details to follow



Horizontal Working Group on Drugs

In February 2025, Project Lead Helen Fitzgerald presented on Safe Futures at the EU Council's Horizontal Working Group on Drugs in Brussels, while REPPP's Dr Catherine Naughton presented on the REPPP Greentown Response Programme which is working to prevent young people from being recruited into criminal networks.



It was a great opportunity to raise awareness of the work being undertaken in this area as policymakers across Europe seek to respond to the complex issue of young people's involvement in drug-related criminal markets.



Thank you to the teams from the Polish presidency of the Council of the European Union for the invite, and to the Permanent Representation of Ireland to the EU , the Department of Health, and the Irish Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration for facilitating the visit and presentation.

Upcoming Events

Continue the Conversation with us!

Join us for a Roundtable Discussion at the European Society of Criminology Annual Conference in Athens, Greece on 3-6th September 2025.

Our Roundtable Discussion will present initial findings from a review of academic and grey literature by the Project Team, as well as interventions being implemented and trialled in several European jurisdictions, including Ireland, France, Sweden. For more details, go to:

https://eurocrim2025.com/



Call for Abstracts

Do you want to do something about serious youth violence and youth involvement in organised crime?

Then think about submitting to a special issue of '*Behavioural Sciences*' with guest editors Dr Seán Redmond, REPPP, and Dr. Colm Walsh, Queens University Belfast.

Systematic reviews of the extant evidence about youth involved in serious violence and organised crime are yielding little in terms of interventions that are sufficiently impactful.

There is a knowledge gap between what science can tell us about what works and how the problem of serious youth crime presents in all its complex reality. This special issue is aiming to help close this gap, and is looking for evidence based and evidence informed contributions that throw new light on potential solutions.

For more information, go to:

Behavioural Sciences Special Issue



Meet the Project Team

The work of the Project is being led and co-ordinated by Helen Fitzgerald and Dr Eoin O'Meara Daly.

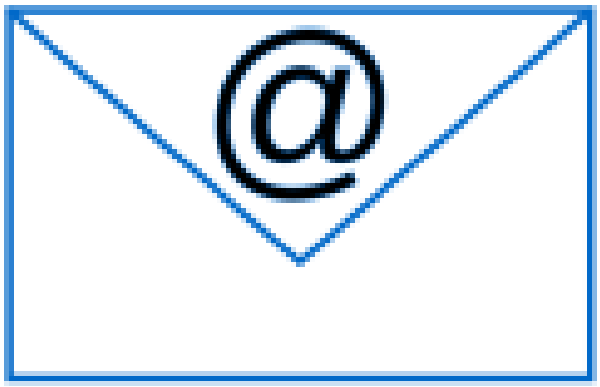


Helen is the Assistant Director of REPPP (Research Evidence into Policy, Programmes and Practice), and has over 20 years' experience managing research, monitoring and evaluation projects and implementing social inclusion programmes in community settings. Prior to joining REPPP, Helen worked for the Local Development Company for Limerick City where she held the roles of Co-ordinator of Research, Monitoring and Communications and Co-ordinator of Social Inclusion Programmes.



Eoin is a Research Fellow in Youth Justice with REPPP. Eoin has worked on the REPPP Action Research Project, a collaboration with 16 Youth Diversion Projects to examine 'relational practice' between practitioners and young people in youth justice settings. Eoin was also a lead researcher on the REPPP Greentown Replication study, the Greentown Programme Design initiative and author of the Bluetown report that examined young people's involvement in criminal networks.

Contact Us



Contact us....

.....to find out more about the project, or to share new literature, reports or insights about the complex area of youth recruitment and participation in European Drugs Markets.

We want to hear from you!

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