

# **Mind the Gap: Understanding the Impact of School-to-Work Transitions on Youth Mental and Emotional Health**

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The paper delves into the intricate interplay between mental and emotional health and the challenging transition from school/university to the workforce. Presenting the preliminary results of the Erasmus+ project “Mind the Gap: Supporting Young People’s Mental and Emotional Health in School to Work Transitions” (2023-2025), the paper seeks to shed light on the multifaceted factors influencing the mental and emotional well-being of young individuals navigating this transitional phase, as well as on young people’s own coping strategies.

The discussed research is based on a series of qualitative interviews conducted in Italy, Germany, Spain and Slovenia with young people aged between 16 and 25 and differentiated backgrounds in terms of gender, socio- economic status, ethnic background and sexual orientation.

Firstly, through the intersectional analysis of the interviews the study explores youth subjective experiences of mental and emotional health during the school/university to work transition. Secondly, by focusing on the dynamic interplay between academic stressors, career uncertainties, and personal identity development, it provides a comprehensive understanding of the emotional challenges faced by young adults during this critical period and of the strategies they enact to deal with them, individually and collectively. Finally, while examining the emotional impact of academic expectations, societal pressures, and the inherent uncertainties associated with career choices, the contribution also investigates the role of different professionals working with young people in this phase (e.g., teachers, educators, career advisors) in fostering environments conducive to positive mental health outcomes.