



# Young carers' mental health

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# The Eurocarers Network

European network of carers' organisations and relevant research institutes. 67 members from 25 European countries.

## Our mission

Ensure that the significant contribution made by informal carers to health and social care systems and the economy as a whole is recognised and safeguarded through adequate support.

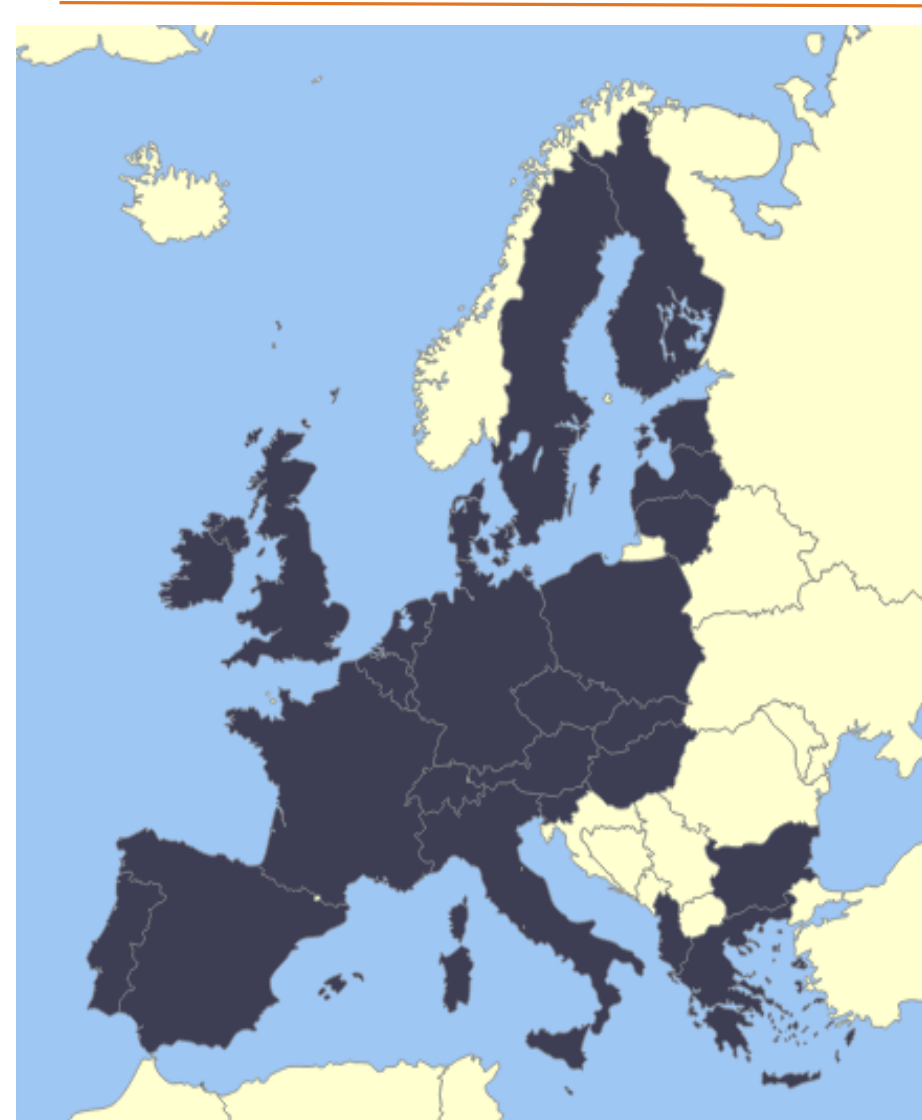
## Who are the informal carers?

Any person who provides care - usually unpaid - to someone with a chronic illness, disability or other long lasting health or care need, outside a professional or formal framework.



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# Who are young carers?

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Young carers are children and young persons under 18 who care, unpaid, for a family member with an illness or disability, mental health condition or addiction.

They carry out, often on a regular basis, significant or substantial caring tasks and assume a level of responsibility that would usually be associated with an adult.

## Young adult carers

18– 24 years

## Adolescent young carers

15- 17

# What do young carers do?

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- Practical tasks (e.g. cooking, housework and shopping);
- Physical care (e.g. helping someone out of bed);
- Emotional support (e.g. talking to someone who is distressed);
- Personal care (e.g. helping someone dress);
- Managing the family budget and collecting prescriptions;
- Helping to give medicine;
- Helping someone communicate;
- Looking after brothers and sisters.



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## Number of children caring England & Wales (Census 2001, 2011)

AGE	2001 England and Wales	2011 England and Wales	Increase	% increase
5 - 7	5,465	9,985	4,520	83%
8 - 9	7,834	12,148	4,314	55%
10 - 14	62,661	72,266	9,605	15%
15	21,402	23,848	2,446	11%
16 - 17	52,580	59,671	7,091	13%
All	149,942	177,918	27,976	19%

## Hours per week spent caring, England & Wales (Census 2011)

AGE	1 - 19 HOURS	20 - 49 HOURS	50+ HOURS	TOTAL
5 - 7	7,177	1,166	1,642	9,985 (6%)
8 - 9	9,424	1,204	1,520	12,148 (7%)
10 - 14	59,262	7,043	5,961	72,266 (41%)
15	19,596	2,489	1,763	23,848 (13%)
16 - 17	47,309	7,520	4,842	59,671 (33%)
All	142,768 (80%)	19,422 (11%)	15,728 (9%)	177,918



# Number of young carers across Europe

## Ireland

3.800 children under 15 years were carers.  
Half of these were aged 10 and under

## Italy

7,3 % boys  
6,9% girls  
(15-24 years)

## The Netherlands

6% young  
carers (13-17  
years)

## Switzerland

7,9% young  
carers (10-15  
years)

## Sweden

7% young  
carers (14-16  
years)

42,227

The number  
of hours care  
provided per  
week by children  
under 15.

2,2  
million

The number  
of hours care  
provided per  
year by children  
under 15.

(Ireland, 2016 Census)



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# Young carers are hidden and invisible

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- ✓ Problem in self-identification
- ✓ Fear of being judged or misunderstood by their peers, teachers or service providers
- ✓ Fear of child protection intervention (separation)
- ✓ Fear to appear not good enough in providing support for their family member
- ✓ Stigma (e.g. when cared for person has mental illness or substance dependency)
- ✓ Uncertainty about who to talk to
- ✓ Believe that nothing will change if they disclose their caring responsibilities
- ✓ Service providers tend to focus on the cared for person
- ✓ Wider community is not aware of specific services for young carers (if any)



Young carers remain **unidentified** and their **needs** are **not met**

# The impact of caring

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## Mental health and wellbeing

Young carers can gain satisfaction from caring and experience self-esteem, empathy, maturity. Yet, having to reconcile new life challenges (e.g. entering the labor market, attending university courses, starting their own family) with caring responsibilities can be overwhelming. The pressure associated with caring can be considered as a **risk factor for mental ill-health**.

## Education

In the absence of adequate support, caring can have a negative impact on young carers' education, as it can entail **under-achievement, absence and drop-outs**. These short term effects can cause **low employability** in the long term.

## Social Life

Young carers might have less dedicated time for personal development and leisure. They can also become victim of social **stigma and bullying**, with the result of a higher life **course social exclusion**.

# Focus on mental health

**Positive aspects** of caring (self-mastery, self-esteem, maturity, empathy and coping strategies). But when care become intense:

- worse mental health than their peers.
- Lower levels of life satisfaction
- internalised problem behaviours (feeling depressed, being withdrawn and anxiety)



The most common worries concern the health of the person cared for, their own health, who will look after them (if their parent is hospitalised for example), school work, money, bullying and having no friends.

Their most common problems relate to sleeping, suicidal thoughts, self-harm and eating disorders.

The young carers with the **highest levels of caring** don't cope as well with everyday living compared to the whole young carers' group. Their **mental health and wellbeing is more at risk**.



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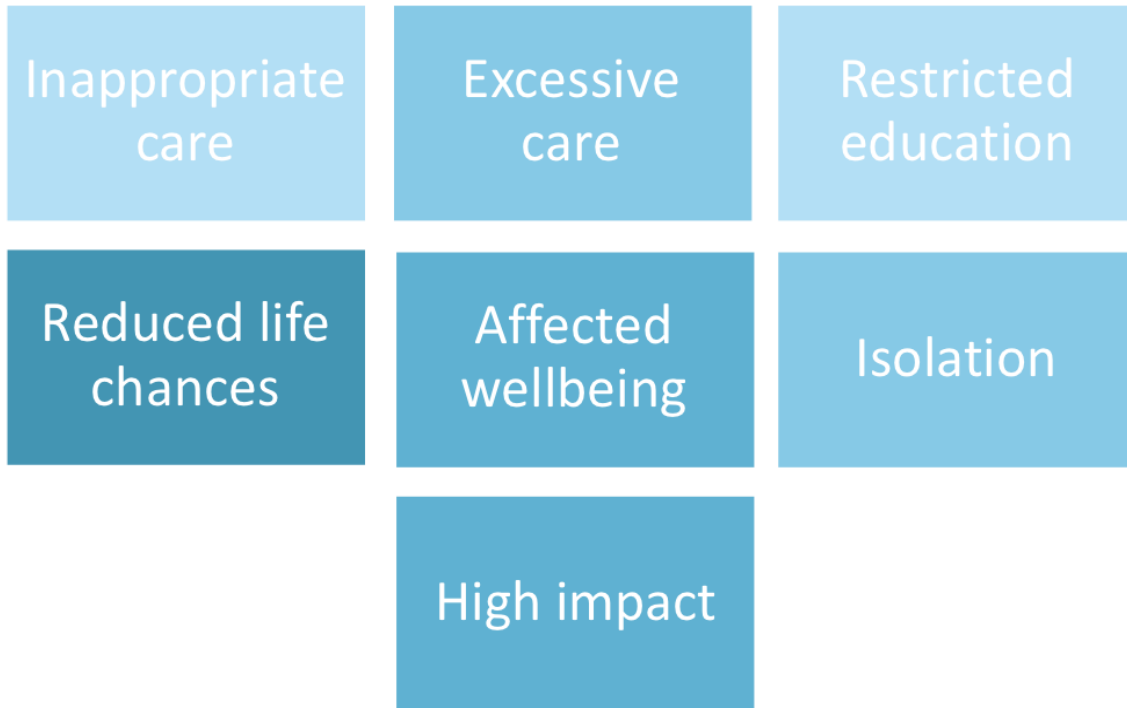


# What we want

Aim is to reduce **inappropriate** and **excessive** caring and negative outcomes (moving YCs ‘from **vulnerability to growth**’)



## From *Vulnerability* ...



## ... To *Growth*



# Why do we need to support young carers?

## Human rights argument

“**Every child has the right to...**” education, highest attainable standard of psychical and mental health, right to leisure and play, to express their views, to information, to their family life to be respected.

They are a **vulnerable groups with specific needs** →

States have a responsibility to take all available measures to make sure children’s rights are respected and the lack of **extra, tailored positive actions** to support young carers can be considered as a failure to protect and promote their rights.

## Economic argument

Investing in young people is a **social investment**

**Early school leaving** is an obstacle to economic growth and employment

**Poor mental health is a cost** for societies

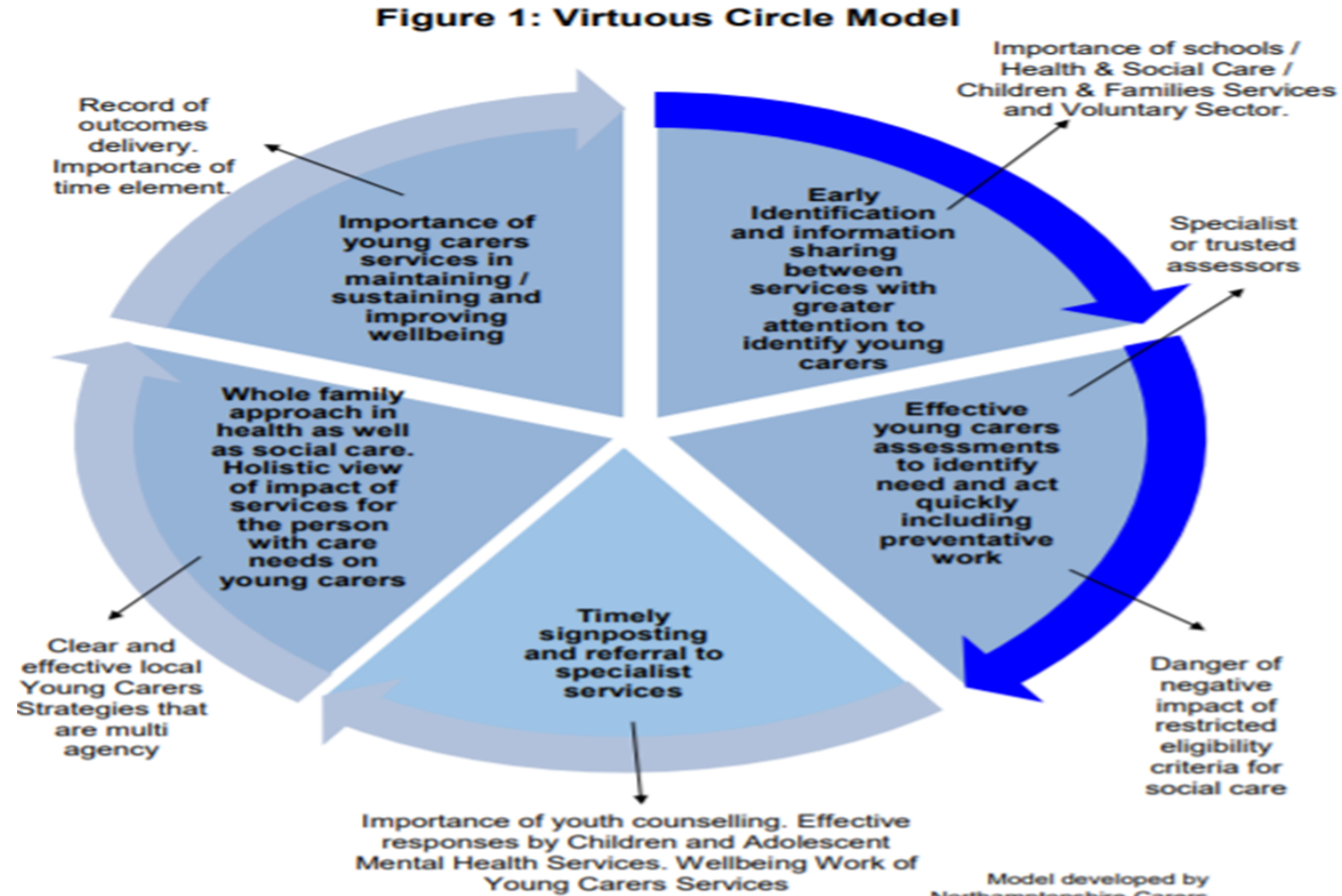


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# How to support young carers?

- ✓ Provide more adequate and intensive **formal care** services to the cared-for person
- ✓ **Identify** young carers (vital role of schools!)
- ✓ **Assess** the health and social needs of care recipients, carers and the family as a unit (**whole family approach**)
- ✓ **Early intervention** (adopting a **preventative, lifelong approach**, focusing on specific needs at specific times and a **collaborative approach**, bringing together different services (youth, education, care, health, family)).



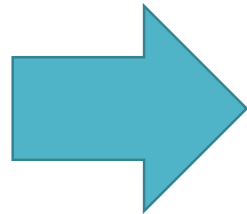
# Key factors to move policies and practices forward for Young Carers



Raise awareness on young carers among health, education & social care practitioners and policy makers



Research and evaluation (what works and why?)



Policies and practices that recognise and support young carers



# Raising awareness about young carers at EU level



European Parliament Informal Carers Interest Group, Meeting on Young carers: challenges and solutions, 6 March 2018

Many governments and services providers instances are unaware rather than unwilling

Pilot project on supporting Young Carers by MEP Pietinkainen

[Eurocarers Policy briefing on young carers](#)

[Universal Children's Day: young carers deserve full enjoyment of their rights! \(20 November 2017\)](#)

[Press Releases: European Parliament Informal Carers Interest Group calls for action to support young carers \(7 March 2018\)](#)

[DG Justice Newsletter on rights of the child No 3 2018 \(18 April 2018\)](#)

EUROCARERS POLICY PAPER  
YOUNG CARERS

PRESS  
RELEASE



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# Hearing from the experts: the Eurocarers Young Carers Working group



Common challenges:  
loneliness, exclusion, no  
one listening, and often a  
sense of being different

Different  
childhood,  
same needs as  
every other  
child.

Need for more assistance from  
professionals and from the rest  
of our surroundings

A simple action can change  
the life of young carers!

Don't reduce us to  
just being young  
carers. We have the  
right to be normal  
children and young  
people!

Young carers have important  
skills!



# Working on a campaign to support young carers

Aim: To develop an EU-wide campaign to support young carers addressed to policymakers, based on the principles of the **European Pillar of Social Rights**



The Principles	The relevance for young carers
<b>Principle n. 1 – Education, training and life-long learning</b>	Caring responsibilities can have a negative impact on young carers' education (under-achievement, absence and drop-outs)
<b><i>Principle n. 4 – Active support to employment</i></b>	Young carers are more likely to be NEET (not in education, employment or training) than their peers.
<b><i>Principle n 11 – Childcare and support to children</i></b>	Young carers needs to be considered as children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to extra, tailored support so that they can have equal opportunities in enjoying social rights.
<b><i>Principle n. 18 – Long-term care</i></b>	By providing good quality formal LTC services to the person they care for, inappropriate caring can be avoided.

# Me-We Project: Psychosocial Support for promoting mental health and wellbeing among adolescent young carers in Europe

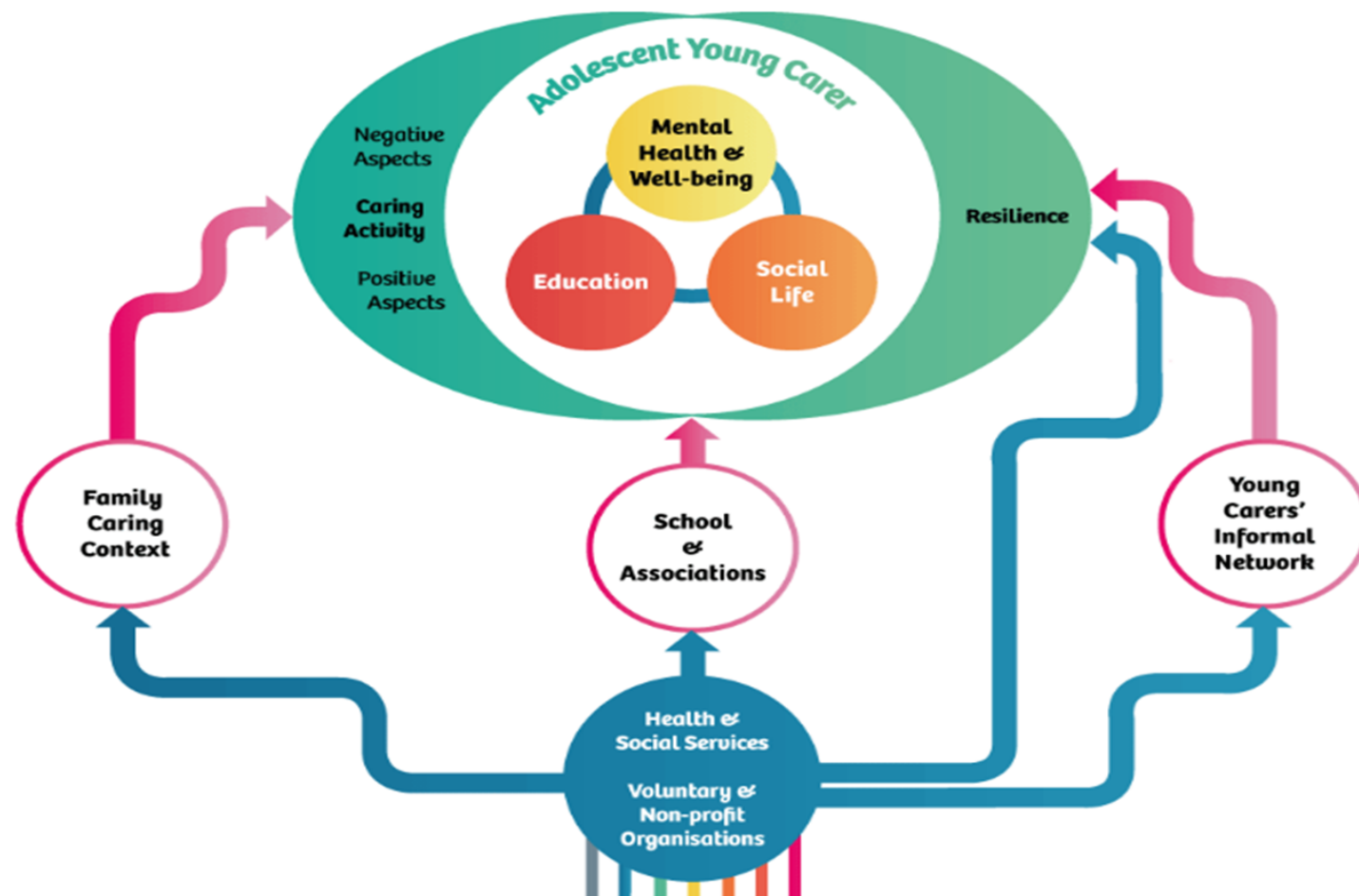


<http://me-we.eu/>  
[#youngcarers](#) [#Me\\_WE](#)

# Towards improved resilience and enhanced social support for adolescent young carers



Aim: to mitigate the risk factor of being an adolescent young carers by empowering the young with **improved resilience** (the process of negotiating, managing and adapting to significant sources of stress or trauma) and **enhanced social support** (from family, school, peers, services).





# The Me-We Project Consortium



The University for Working Professionals.



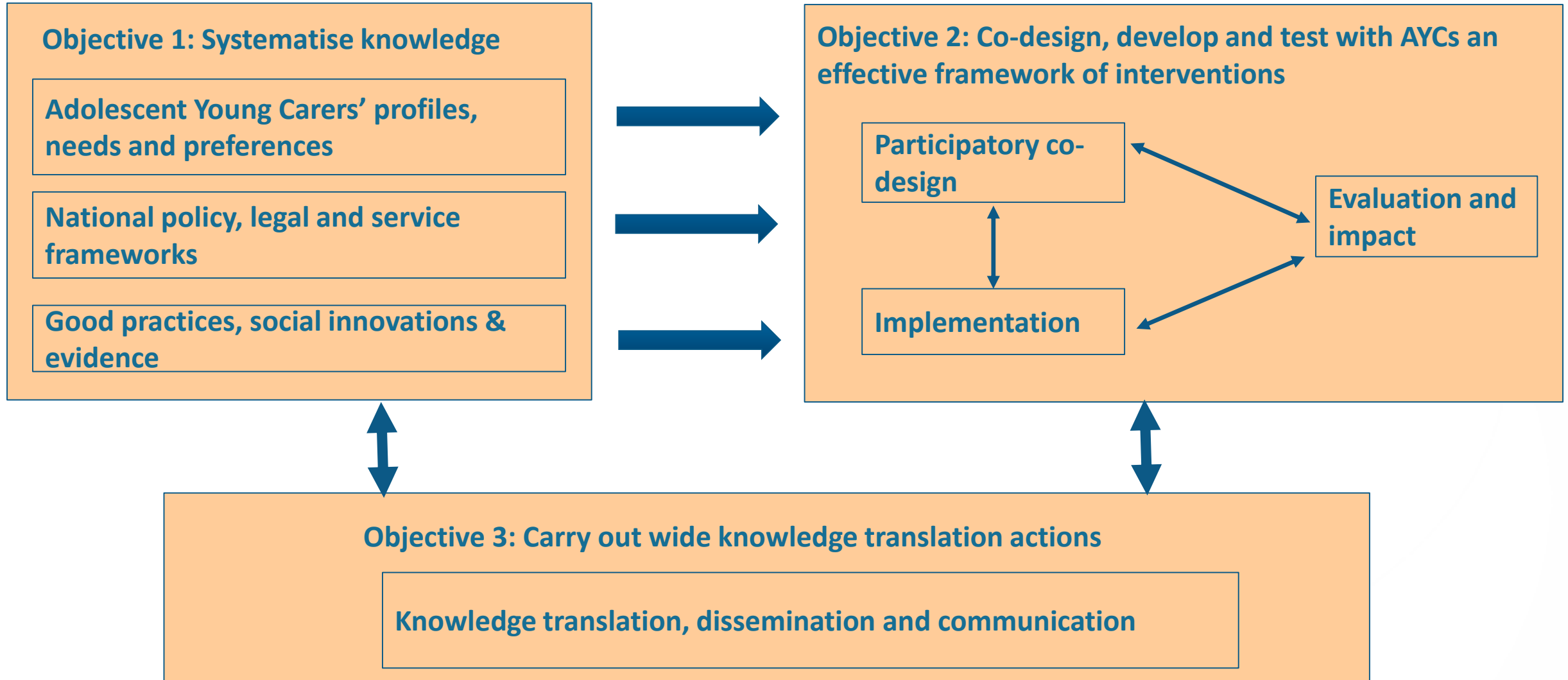
University of Ljubljana  
Faculty of Social Sciences

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# The project objectives & activities



## Individual level

Short & medium  
term

Improved mental well-being in  
the targeted group of young  
people

Long term

reduced school dropout;  
improved educational  
efforts;  
enhanced employability.

## Societal level

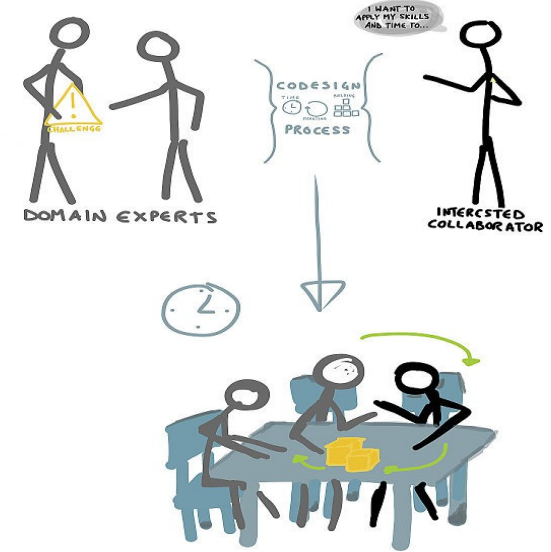
Strong evidence base for mental  
well-being promotion  
programmes in Europe  
→ greater health equity.

Preventative strategies are  
established  
→ reduced occurrence of  
mental disorders

# The innovative aspects of the project



- It develops an **innovative framework of primary prevention interventions** to be tested and **adapted in 6 European countries** at different stages of awareness and development of services for adolescent young carers.
- **Co-design approach:** researchers will engage directly with and involve adolescent and adult young carers, together with carer organisations and majors stakeholders through all the stages of the project.
- It implements innovative **Blended Learning Networks, i.e. heterogeneous 'communities of practice'** involving adolescent young carers and relevant stakeholders for discussing and finding best solutions.
- It is the first large scale programme to demonstrate the impact of a comprehensive primary prevention intervention for improving resilience of adolescent young carers.
- It ensures transversal knowledge sharing activities among partners and within cluster of countries.





# Innovative School Education Methodologies and tools for guaranteeing social inclusion of young carers (EDY-CARE)



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

**Aim:** Empower teachers and other school staff (e.g., school nurses, psychologists, social workers, management) in upper secondary education to recognise adolescent young carers (16-19 years old) in classes and maximize their learning opportunities, while ensuring their social inclusion.

## Current situation

Lack of awareness among school staff about existence of young carers and their needs

- failure in **tailoring** education at schools to YCs' needs
- negative consequences on their educational attainments (as well as on their health, social inclusion and employment opportunities)



## Desired situation

School staff is empowered to identify and support YC in their educational career→

- school dropout of YCs decreases
- educational efforts and attitudes towards higher education are improved
- Young carers employability is improved



Cuidadores Portugal



University of Ljubljana  
Faculty of Social Sciences



Linnæus University



**Anziani  
e non solo**

Società cooperativa



*Save  
the  
Date*

20 November 2020 - International  
Young Carers Conference, Brussels



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Together we can achieve the desired  
change!

Thank you!

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Email: [fc@eurocarers.org](mailto:fc@eurocarers.org)

[www.eurocarers.org](http://www.eurocarers.org)

More on young carers: <http://eurocarers.org/Young-Carers>

Edy-Care Project: <http://eurocarers.org/edycare/index>

Me-We Project: <http://me-we.eu/>

