

# **Social and Healthcare Students Developing the Smoking Cessation Methods**

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## **Abstract**

Social and health care professionals are in a key role to prevent smoking and doing smoking cessation work, therefore it is essential to find new ways in higher education and vocational schools to increase students' competences to meet the clients who are smoking and how to guide them to stop smoking. The pilot project describes how the social work and nursing students have designed creative and participatory smoking prevention and smoking cessation methods, which are flexible and easy to apply to practice. Social work and nursing students also implemented designed methods by teaching smoking prevention and smoking cessation for the practical nurse students in vocational schools. Developed creative and participatory methods can also be used in a real guidance processes at work when encountering the smoking clients. During the pilot project, students were learning also multi-professional working, which is important competence in smoking prevention work as well.

**Keywords:** smoking, smoking cessation, prevention, guidance methods

## **1 Introduction**

Finland has an ambitious aim to be a smoking free country by the year 2040. The road-map to this target defines four focus areas: enhancing the positive attitude towards non-smoking; preventing adolescents' initiation of the use of the tobacco products; supporting quitting the use of tobacco products, and strengthening the implementation of the Tobacco Act [1].

To reach the target of smoking free country all the policy sectors need to be committed to work for it in decision-making and all the means of preventing smoking needs to be taken in use. The key persons to promote and support smoking free target are the social and health care professionals. It is essential that they all understand the addiction smoking causes, how

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to prevent smoking, and how to do effective smoking cessation guidance. Most of the people who smoke would like to quit smoking, quite many of them have also tried to do so but not managed [2]. Smokers need support and guidance, and social and health care professionals have an important role in this work.

In this article, the pilot project is described where the smoking prevention and smoking cessation knowledge and skills of social and health care students in higher education and vocational schools were increased. In the pilot project, the creative and participatory methods were designed and used for supporting the learning. The pilot project is funded by the Finnish National Institute for Health and Welfare.

## 2 Smoking in Finland and other European Countries

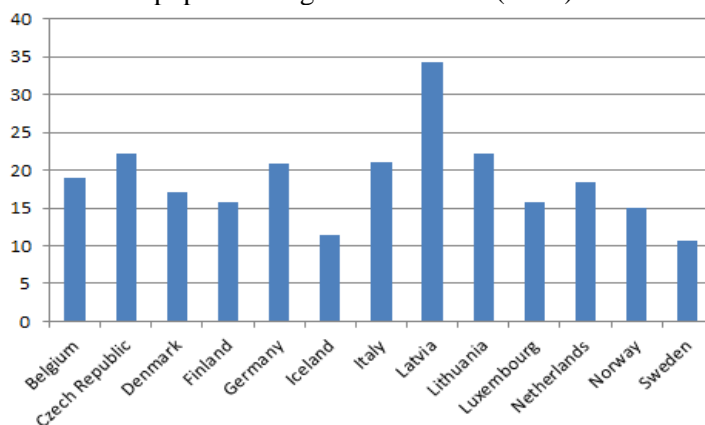
In Finland, the number of the daily smokers is 19% of 15-64 year old men, and 13% of women in a year 2013. Smoking has been declined for years, at the beginning of the century the corresponding figures were men 26 % and women 17 %. Every day use of the tobacco products among the 14-18 year old adolescents is 13 %, as it was 26 % at the beginning of 2000. The use of the electric cigarettes is 2 % among the 15-65 years old Finnish people, and snuff is used 3 % of men, less than 1 % women. The use of the snuff and electric cigarettes has increased popularity among the young people [3, 4, 5]. In a table 1 is shown how the smoking is estimated to develop in Finland by the year 2025. According to the Finnish National Health Institute 54 % of men and 58 % of women would like to quit smoking, but just 3-5 % of them manages to quit totally [6].

Table 1: Trends in daily smoking among men and women aged 15 years and over in Finland

Year	Men	Women	Both sexes
2000	26.4	17.0	21,5
2005	23.0	15.0	18.9
2010	19.9	13.3	16.5
2015	17.3	11.7	14.4
2020	15.1	10.3	12.6
2025	13.1	9.1	11.1

The number of the daily smokers in Finland is among the lowest in Europe with the other Nordic countries, most common the smoking is in the eastern European post-soviet countries. In general the variation of the proportion of the daily smokers in European area is large. In a table 2 is presented the OECD statistics of the daily smokers in 13 European countries [8].

Table 2: The percentage of the daily smokers in 13 European countries among the population aged 15 and over (2013)



The same trend is seen also with the young smokers in Europe. The number of the adolescent smoking weekly at the age of 15 is lowest in Nordic countries, less than 15%, compared to the eastern European countries (Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary) where more than 25% of 15 year old announce smoking more than once a week [9]. In order to reduce smoking the special attention should be given to the young smokers as they tend to continue smoking in adulthood. Just few start smoking after the age of 25 (6%) [10, 11] In the table three it is presented the percentage of young people aged 15, who smoke at least once a week in eight European countries [9].

Table 3: The percentage of young people aged 15 (smoking at least once a week) in eight European countries in 2009

	Boys	Girls
Austria	25 %	29 %
Czech Republic	22 %	28 %
Hungary	26 %	26 %
Latvia	32 %	22 %
Lithuania	34 %	21 %
Croatia	27 %	25 %
Greece	18 %	13 %
Slovak Republic	21 %	17 %

In Finland the trend in decreasing smoking among the adolescent and young people has continued positively. The tobacco policy has been effective controlling for example the tobacco advertising, and selling the tobacco products for under 18 years old. Also a growing number of the children and young people have grown in a family where the parents are not smoking or doesn't smoke inside or in a car. Parents' non-smoking model is supporting the children's and young people's non-smoking attitude [5]. The ability to reflect the benefits and harms of smoking and to understand smoking risks seems to strengthen children's and young people's health-protective behavior [13].

Socio-economical differences are still remarkable between the smokers in Finland. Smoking is more common among the people with lower education and income. Among the adolescent the high-risk indicators are poor school achievement and especially the peer group and the best friend smoking. The better the school achievement is the more likely the adolescent is not smoking [14, 15, 16]. The smoking behavior is also more common in vocational education than in high school or in a higher education. In Finnish school system students choose after the basic comprehensive education between the upper secondary schools and vocational schools. From both options the students have a possibility to enter the higher education institutions, whether the science universities or universities of applied sciences. The more common is to continue to the higher education from the upper secondary schools than from the vocational schools [17].

Social and health care professionals are encountering the smokers at their work daily, but the smoking prevention and smoking cessation knowledge and skills have been found limited in social and health care. The professionals in social and health care as well as the teachers in social and health care education should have the evidence based competence in preventing smoking and guiding the people quitting the smoking [fc. 18].

Smoking prevention and smoking cessation knowledge and skills have been found limited in social and health care. The professionals in social and health care as well as the teachers in social and health care education should have the evidence based competence in preventing smoking and guiding the people quitting the smoking [18]. In social and health care education on all levels, to develop the students' expertise needs a synthesis between the practical experience, gaining theoretical knowledge, applying the knowledge and constructing the new knowledge [19]. It is necessary to know what students already know about the smoking, and what their experiences of smoking are. Knowing the students' previous experiences is beneficial when developing new and creative answers to smoking prevention and cessation guidance [fc.20].

In this article, the pilot project is described where the smoking prevention and smoking cessation knowledge and skills of social and health care students in higher education and vocational schools were increased. In the pilot project, the creative and participatory methods were designed and used for supporting the learning. The project is funded from the health promotion budget of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

### **3 The Aim and Participants of the Project "Competence in Tobacco Cessation Interventions"**

The aim of the pilot project "Competence in tobacco cessation interventions" was to develop social and health care students' smoking prevention and smoking cessation competences in higher education and vocational schools. The more specific objectives in this project were to improve the practical nurses' professional competence of smoking cessation in the areas of knowledge, skills and attitudes, and to increase practical nurses' awareness of smoking and to motivate them for being smoking-free. In addition, the objectives were to support the higher education social work and nurse students' guidance skills in smoking cessation, and to develop the creative and participatory smoking prevention and smoking cessation methods, which are flexible and easy to apply to practice.

Lahti University of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Social and Health Care has been a

leading partner in a project. The other partner in this project is Häme University of Applied Sciences, four vocational schools from different Finnish cities (Lahti, Hämeenlinna and Forssa), and Helsinki University who brought the expertise on health communication and social media to the project.

The practical nurse students from the vocational level of education was chosen to this project because after the graduation they are mainly working in the primary health care or social care, meeting for example children and young people and their families, or people with mental health and addiction problems. It is also important to notice that considerable amount of students in vocational education are every day smokers, smoking in higher education is not at all that common [4, 21].

#### 4 Project Implementation

The main idea in this pilot project implementation was that the social work and nurse students were teaching smoking prevention and smoking cessation for the practical nurses in vocational schools. The purpose was to support the peer learning, and to design and use creative, experiential and cooperative learning methods, which allow participants dealing their emotions and feelings connected to smoking. The idea in working was to find flexible and easy to apply methods to be used in teaching smoking prevention and smoking cessation, which fit especially for the young adults.



Picture 1: Project framework for increasing the smoking prevention and smoking cessation competence of social and healthcare students in higher education and in vocational education schools

The project implementation consisted of theoretical online learning environment and methodological workshops (Picture 1). The online learning environment consists of a study module which was based on the Tobacco dependence and tobacco detoxification - National Guideline [22], as well as the results of smoking and smoking cessation research. During the methodological workshops, the social work and nurse students were designing

functional, creative and collaborative guidance methods for teaching smoking prevention and smoking cessation for the practical nurse students in vocational schools. The action based and community based learning methods were used when designing the guidance methods, and building up a group counselling plan. Each methodology workshop has been 4 hours at a time, altogether 7 workshops has been arranged in both universities of applied sciences. The importance of health communication competence was emphasized during the methodological workshops as the competence to use digital forums (eg. social media) as an environment to reach young people and to participate them to smoking prevention [cf. 23]. There has been two counseling sessions for practical nurses in four vocational schools; sessions have lasted 4 hours at the time. After the counselling sessions, where the guidance methods were tested, the feedback discussions and reflections were made in assessment workshops.

In addition, social work and nurse students practiced Motivational Interviewing method in a simulation-learning environment as a part of the methodological workshops. Motivational Interviewing as an intervention is according to various studies significantly effective and it has a positive impact on tobacco cessation. MI has been used to decrease risky health behaviors and to increase the smokers` engagement in treatment [eg. 24]. In the simulation-learning environment, the students practiced their counseling skills in relationship with a "smoker". The interaction between the smoker and the counselor is based on mutual respect and collaborative relationship [20]. The smoker needs to be heard and encountered as an individual and equal person [25, 26]

In the pilot project the teachers working in the higher education and in the vocational level has needed a close cooperation, which has also increased the common understanding of the importance of developing the content and the methods of smoking prevention and smoking cessation education. The teachers` expertise from different fields of social and health care was beneficial, especially the expertise on creative methods, health related communication, and social media were essential when finding out and designing the new approaches to smoking prevention and smoking cessation.

## 5 Results

As a result of the students` learning process and cooperation in methodology workshops they designed creative and participatory smoking prevention and smoking cessation methods, which are flexible and easy to apply to practice. All the project material is available to take in free use from the project site. At the moment the site is in Finnish but in the future the material will be available in English for the free use (<http://tupakatta.blogspot.fi/>)

The developed creative and participatory guidance methods are under the two main topics: Gaming Tobacco Knowledge, and Practice Guidance Competence. Gaming Tobacco Knowledge includes nine different knowledge-increasing methods. Practice Guidance Competence includes six different guidance methods for students to train their smoking cessation skills.

### *Gaming Tobacco Knowledge*

Good examples of Gaming Tobacco Knowledge are the mobile quiz. In mobile quiz, students created a quiz, which was made with Socrative programme. The questions are answered by mobile phones in small groups or pairs. Giving a right answer makes the

spaceship to move on the mobile phone's screen, the winner is the one who has managed to get the ship furthest when all the questions have been answered. The aim is to test the tobacco and smoking knowledge by gaming.

### *Practice Guidance Competence*

The topic Practice Guidance Competence includes collaborative and participatory trainings. The basic idea of these trainings is that the students learn through their own self-knowledge to be dialogical, and are able to genuinely listen to the smokers. In the drawing practice the students are working in small groups and they are asked to draw a character, who is smoking. Around the character, the words or symbols are written or drawn, which are describing the character. Next the students are asked what assumptions are connected to the smoker. After that, the students are asked to make the life story for the character, for example using the questions how old the character is, where does he live, what does he do, to whom he is important? Now the aim is to look at the character from the new perspective, and how the smoking is connected to his life and what meanings the smoking might have in his life. The training is closed with the reflective discussion, and learning experiences. Another example is to use postcards to help students to discuss about smoking. A different kind of postcards is set to the table and students are choosing the one, which they feel that answers the set question. This helps students to find new perspectives to the topic or situation, those that does not immediately come to mind through rational verbal communication. Using the photo guidance method commits participant to think the smoking related questions in a different way than using only the verbal discussion. With the creative and participatory methods, students are activated to recognize their own beliefs and stereotypes concerning the smoking and smokers. It is essential to understand the importance of smoking to the smokers, in order to be able to support them to quit smoking.

## **6 Conclusion**

“Competence in tobacco cessation interventions” pilot project has brought out several possibilities for the future pilots and research works. The designed creative and participatory smoking prevention and smoking cessation methods can be used in primary schools and in high schools to participate the students to discuss about smoking, and to courage the peer support to promote the non-smoking attitude at the school. Developed creative and participatory methods can also be used in a real guidance processes to help smokers to raise their awareness of their own smoking history, and the meanings smoking has for them. Methods can be applied also to expand smokers' understanding of their own resources of the various aspects of their lives in order to plan the lifestyle changes. The participatory methods could be beneficial also with the challenging guidance situations, for example with the smokers having mental health problems or alcohol misuse. It has noticed that traditional medical models and guidance methods are inadequate to meet the challenge in smoking prevention and smoking cessation work [28].

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