

Early Warning System (EWS) Teachers Guide



EWS Teacher Guide

Introduction – Why did we create this tool?

F3 – Fitter Minds, Fitter VET, Fitter Jobs is an Erasmus+ KA2 project aiming to make vocational education and training more inclusive and well-being oriented. The partnership brings together: **Magyar Digitális Oktatásért Egyesület**, an association based in Budapest, Hungary, committed to innovation in digital teaching; **Šolski center Nova Gorica**, a Slovenian school center in Nova Gorica active in technical and vocational education; **Scuola Centrale Formazione – SCF**, an Italian national network that coordinates and supports VET providers; **BBS Syke – Europaschule**, a vocational institute in Niedersachsen, Germany, based in Syke, focused on technical training with a European dimension; **Colegio de Enseñanza y Readaptación SL**, a training provider based in Barcelona, Catalonia (Spain), active in educational and reintegration pathways.

In the years following the pandemic, European VET schools have seen a significant increase in work-related stress, anxiety, declining motivation, and a sense of overload among teachers, with direct effects on teaching quality and the school climate. From consultations among the partners, a common critical point emerges: schools and teachers lack simple, reliable tools to detect early signs of professional strain and activate proportionate supports. Many difficulties remain “invisible” due to shame, stigma, or low awareness. Hence the need for an **Early Warning System (EWS)**.

The F3 project was born in this context: its goal is to reduce (often invisible or stigmatized) barriers to access, participation, and achievement by equipping schools with a recurring digital screening tool with automatic data analysis and alerts when needed—supported by guidelines, toolkits, and training to turn results into concrete actions. The tool is preventive, not clinical, and uses anonymous, aggregated responses; it does not aim to diagnose, but to guide timely educational/organizational interventions and strengthen a psychologically safe environment. The theoretical framework is **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)**, a form of cognitive-behavioral psychotherapy based on six core processes: acceptance, defusion, presence, self-as-context, values, and committed action. These processes help develop psychological flexibility and resilience and overlap with the key social-emotional life skills identified during the design phase of the self-assessment tools. For this reason, in addition to screening **1.1** and the **1.2** follow-ups, the tool includes a section dedicated to psychological flexibility with practical feedback (e.g., mindful pauses, 5-4-3-2-1 grounding, values clarification, action steps).

From this perspective, the EWS is part of a **whole-school approach**: it does not stop at individual cases, but helps frontline VET professionals read and interpret trends within their institution, reflect on current practices, and develop policies for a work climate that promotes mental well-being. The goal is twofold: to prevent the worsening of distress (also related to turnover and burnout) and to promote protective social-emotional competencies for everyone, reducing stigma and discrimination.

Perhaps this section could be replaced with the following:

From this perspective, the EWS helps read and interpret the results of an individual student or teacher, encouraging them to reflect on their psycho-physical health and adopt small

strategies that can increase their level of well-being inside and outside school. Finally, the EWS is designed with ethical and privacy safeguards: it does not collect sensitive/clinical data, uses anonymous/aggregated screenings, and provides clear confidentiality and security processes; the purpose is not to “diagnose,” but to guide prevention and inclusion, activating timely support where needed.

1.2 Structure and sections of the teacher questionnaire and results

The questionnaire is structured as a two-stage pathway. It opens with **Part 1 – 1.1 “How are you feeling right now?”**, a brief, universal, general screening that captures how the teacher has been over the past two weeks, touching on simple, concrete areas such as energy, mood, emotion regulation, relationships, physical activity, and any consumption (understood in a non-clinical sense as habits that may affect well-being, e.g., alcohol use, smoking/nicotine, caffeine), with responses on a **0–4 Likert scale**.

Part 1 – 1.1 “How are you feeling right now?” Areas and sample items:

- € **General well-being and emotions:** “Most of the time I feel physically well”; “I feel calm and happy”; “I can manage my emotions.”
- € **Job satisfaction and relationships:** “I like my job”; “I get along with my colleagues.”
- € **Lifestyle/habits:** physical activity over 7 days; alcohol; use of non-prescribed substances.

From the responses, a well-being profile is generated (**very low / low / medium / high**) that determines the flow: if the profile is **medium or high**, the teacher finishes the questionnaire; if it is **low or very low**, **Part 1 – 1.2** is automatically activated, i.e., a targeted follow-up on specific risk areas. This architecture keeps completion light and at the same time accurate when signals emerge that merit attention.

Part 1.1 quickly measures “how the teacher is doing” over the past two weeks. Based on the responses, the system assigns one of four labels: **very low, low, medium, high**.

- € **High (>29) and Medium (18–29):** continuity messages + “Did you know?” with strategies to maintain balance.
- € **Low/Very Low:** 1.2 opens, mapping where difficulties cluster (mood/anxiety; sleep/energy/appetite; body image; work-related stress; isolation; social media; safety).
The system returns an overall profile (Part 1.1) and, if rated Low/Very Low, provides the option to continue to section 1.2.

Part 1 – 1.2 “How are you feeling right now?”

This part consists of short domain-based blocks (simple language, 0–3/4 scale, and an “I don’t know” option where useful). The items cover the typical domains of standard screening tools, adapted for educational/preventive (non-clinical) purposes. A brief list follows:

- ✗ **Mood/Depression & sleep/appetite/energy** (sadness, anhedonia, guilt, sleep and appetite changes; waking fatigue).
- ✗ **Anxiety** (tachycardia, fear that the worst will happen, difficulty breathing/relaxing, work-related anxiety).
- ✗ **Body image** (comfort in one’s body; comparison with others).
- ✗ **Work-related stress** (overload across paperwork, planning, extra duties, work-life balance; days when “I can’t get up to go to school”).
- ✗ **Isolation among colleagues** (disconnection; difficulty building/maintaining good relationships).
- ✗ **Social media use** (losing track of time; anxiety without access).
- ✗ **Safety/violence** (offensive comments, threats, physical violence, bullying/cyberbullying).

Based on the answers, the system provides personalized feedback aligned to the user’s level of well-being—from very low to high/optimal. For each response, the system automatically identifies whether the corresponding area needs improvement suggestions or is doing well. For example, if my sleep results are low, a message will appear with tips for good sleep hygiene. Conversely, if appetite results are good, a message will encourage me to continue in that direction.

Part 2 – “Do you know yourself?”

The module includes **12 questions** based on ACT principles and returns a profile ranging from **ACT Proficient** to **ACT Needs Support**, while also offering practical classroom suggestions (e.g., a brief mindful pause between lessons, a quick emotional check-in before entering class, a broader look at student behaviors).

- ✗ **ACT Proficient** indicates a good level of competencies: staying present, making room for difficult emotions, stepping back from blocking thoughts, and acting in line with one’s values even under stress.
- ✗ **Adequate/Developing** indicates skills are present but should be consolidated with small, regular practices.
- ✗ **ACT Needs Support** signals fragile competencies and the need for guided prompts and simple routines to start from the basics.

Items cover ACT’s key areas: **acceptance** (making room for difficult emotions and thoughts), **presence** (noticing breath and thoughts between lessons), **self-as-context** (maintaining a

broad perspective on what happens in class and on oneself), **defusion** (stepping back from the mind's "stories," e.g., telling oneself "I'm noticing the thought that..."), **values** (reconnecting with the qualities you want to bring to your work), and **committed action** (taking small, values-aligned steps even on demanding days). In this way, the questionnaire does not "diagnose" but guides prevention and well-being in the classroom, helping each teacher identify simple, sustainable practices to improve daily experience.

Part 2 (ACT) returns profiles with targeted actions to train the key ACT areas mentioned above (presence, acceptance/defusion, values, and committed action).

1.4 Actions for developing social and emotional competencies and for your well-being

2) Daily actions

- € 4-7-8 breathing (60–90").
- € 5-4-3-2-1 grounding (90").
- € Work-life boundaries: fixed email slots; schedule "non-negotiable" well-being activities.
- € Movement-snacks between lessons (3–5').

3) If section 1.2 flags areas as "within norms / monitor / priority": what to do, concretely

A) Psycho-physical / energy–sleep

- € Within norms → sleep routine + evening breathing.
- € Monitor → 7-day micro-plan: 1 evening action (breathing) + 1 daytime action (movement-snack).
- € Priority → 1:1 meeting + 2 concrete steps + follow-up (10–14 days).

B) Emotion regulation / anxiety (including work-related)

- € Within norms → mini mindful pauses.
- € Monitor → daily mindfulness/grounding; identify triggers; if it interferes with work life, consider support.

C) Work-related stress / balance

- € Say no/delegate; short breaks; time off blocked in the calendar.

D) Professional relationships and climate (isolation/belonging)

- ☒ Intentional micro-contacts; peer supervision; quality > quantity.

E) Social media use

- ☒ Notifications off; time limits; phone-free zones (meetings, canteen, bedroom).

F) Safety (offline/online)

- ☒ In cases of insults, threats, violence, cyberbullying: talk immediately to a designated contact; activate protection channels/dedicated services.

4) Linking actions and social-emotional competencies

Work on one competency at a time (1–2 weeks) with micro-actions aligned with ACT processes:

- ☒ **Presence:** 30" mindful pause between lessons; state check before entering class.
- ☒ **Acceptance:** "It's normal to feel this way" after a difficult lesson.
- ☒ **Defusion:** Take some distance from thoughts, recognizing them as thoughts and not facts. Example: "I'm noticing the thought that this class is unmanageable..." (then: "Is this thought useful for my next action?").
- ☒ **Self-as-context:** Broaden your view: remember you're more than the thoughts/emotions of the moment and consider the many causes of classroom behaviors. Sample questions: "What else could be affecting this? Time of day? Class climate? Unclear instructions? External factors?" Goal: respond with greater flexibility instead of reacting impulsively.
- ☒ **Values:** Reconnect with why you do this work; one daily aligned action (e.g., listening to a student).
- ☒ **Committed action:** "One small step today" to make the lesson meaningful.

5) "Did you know?" good practices for schools

- ☒ **4-7-8:** when to use it (evening; high tension; before meetings/boards) and how to do it in 4 steps.
- ☒ **5-4-3-2-1 grounding:** a script to lower hyper-arousal.
- ☒ **Work-life boundaries:** treat self-care as calendar commitments (email slots, teaching tasks at defined times).

- ✎ **Peer networks:** PLCs, supervision, and reflective groups reduce isolation and increase self-efficacy.
- ✎ **Periodic administration of the questionnaire** with immediate feedback + tips.

1.5 When should you seek professional help?

In European VET schools, well-being and teaching within educational/learning environments should foster: an inclusive climate (capable of spotting signs of strain early), motivation, teaching quality, and student success. The approach is **primary prevention**: increase awareness (teachers, leadership), train social-emotional competencies, and detect difficulties early with a light, non-clinical digital tool, so you can intervene before problems become more serious.

3) Who to ask for help (and what to expect) – to adapt per country

This section must be **localized by each country/school**. Replace the placeholders below with your national and local references.

- ✎ **Who you can contact (country-specific):**
[Insert role/title for designated teacher or safeguarding lead], [Insert tutor/counselor role], [Insert school psychologist/well-being service], [Insert national/regional helplines], [Insert local health/social services], [Insert emergency number—for immediate risk].
- ✎ **Confidentiality & consent:**
Support is provided with respect and confidentiality, in line with [insert national data protection/safeguarding laws/policies].
- ✎ **What usually happens:**
A short conversation to understand your needs, **1–2 practical steps for the next 7–14 days**, and—if needed—a referral to [insert country-specific service or pathway].
- ✎ **In case of urgency/safety risk:**
Contact [insert emergency number] immediately and inform [insert designated school contact].

Replace all bracketed items with the correct names, numbers, and links for your country/region/school.

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