

# Evaluation of a Czech Adaptation of the Boys and Girls Plus Prevention Programme

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**BACKGROUND:** The Boys and Girls Plus (B&G+) programme aims to prevent the use of addictive substances and its consequences among the adolescent population by adopting attitudes that lead to a healthy lifestyle. **AIMS:** The aim of the evaluation was to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the B&G+ programme and to identify the most appropriate target group of students in the Czech Republic.

**DESIGN AND MEASUREMENTS:** The research design was based on a European evaluation which took place in all the countries where the programme was piloted. Students filled in an attitude questionnaire before and after the intervention. Teachers filled in an evaluation questionnaire. The data obtained was mainly processed quantitatively. Qualitative processing, which involved evaluation questionnaires for prevention methodologists, is a complement to the

study. **INTERVENTION:** In the Czech Republic, the B&G+ programme was implemented by teachers acting as school prevention methodologists. **SAMPLE:** The post-intervention questionnaire was completed by students from 31 classes. The average age of the students was 15 years. A total of 26 prevention methodologists completed the questionnaire for programme implementers. **RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS:** The evaluation mainly assessed the development of skills for life. Primarily, the B&G+ preventive programme proved to be effective first and foremost for boys in middle schools (8th and 9th grades). The most significant contribution of this programme to the level of general primary prevention of risky behaviour was found above all in the consolidation of students' life goals. More studies would be needed to determine the effectiveness of the programme in specific areas of prevention.

**Keywords** | Primary prevention – Evaluation – Effectiveness – Use of addictive substances – Adolescence – Healthy lifestyle – Mental health – Promotion

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## ● 1 INTRODUCTION

The evaluation of programmes aimed at preventing risk behaviour is an important part of evidence-based prevention practice. An effective preventive programme should be intensive and ongoing and combine objective factual information with an individualized personal approach (Gallá, 2005).

In the Czech Republic, studies on the effectiveness of several preventive interventions have been published in the last two decades (e.g. Gabrhelík et al., 2012; Jurystová et al., 2017). These can be considered as the basis for good practice in this area of research in the Czech Republic (Miovský, Štastná, Gabrhelík, & Jurystová, 2011). It has long been shown that programmes that are closely focused on specific prevention are more effective when combined with methods that work to improve life skills. Nešpor (in Höschl, Libiger, & Švestka, 2004) states that the majority of self-influencing skills (such as coping with strong emotions, self-motivation, and healthy relaxation) can be mastered by training. It is this combination of skill training with specific topics that can enhance the overall effect of preventive interventions. This interconnection has proved successful in the programmes that have already been evaluated, such as Unplugged (Miovský, Aujezká, & Burešová, 2015), although the evaluation of the Unplugged programme also involved a focus on specific issues of addiction and other areas.

The Boys and Girls Preventive Programme is a programme of specific general primary prevention. The main objective of the programme is to prevent substance abuse and the consequences arising from it in the adolescent population by adopting attitudes that lead to a healthy lifestyle (Rementeria & Cunin, 2015). It focuses on the prevention of addiction, risky sexual behaviour, and eating disorders. It is underpinned by three core elements – providing relevant information, promoting the development of healthy attitudes, and developing life skills. It can be an attractive form of education for students. It is an online animated series and a medium that is very close to adolescents and well understood by them. Each series of videos is followed by specific tasks and other activities. The programme includes a detailed methodology for the teachers who implement it.

The aim of the research was to measure the effectiveness of this preventive programme in the Czech setting. Specifically, the aim was to survey attitudes and identify the most appropriate target groups. Furthermore, the programme was evaluated in terms of satisfaction from the perspective of the students who participated in it, but also by the prevention methodologists who directly implemented the programme in schools.

## ● 2 MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Study Design

The data was evaluated using a predominantly quantitative methodology (attitude questionnaire and programme eval-

uation questionnaire) but also qualitatively (evaluation of prevention methodology).

### 2.2 Sample

A total of 31 classes in various middle schools, grammar schools, and secondary schools participated in the pilot Czech study. The attitude questionnaire was completed by students from 31 classes (of which 22 were recruited from middle schools or the lower grades of grammar schools and seven from secondary schools, while in two cases data on the type of school was not available). In a total of 14 classes, a short version of the programme (three blocks) and 14 longer versions of the programme (four or six blocks) were implemented. For the remaining three classes, programme length data is not available. In total, 331 girls and 289 boys responded to the programmes and 343 girls and 271 boys after the programmes. The average age of the students was 15 years (the youngest respondent was 13, the oldest 20).

### 2.3 Data Collection and Data Analysis

The students completed the attitude questionnaire before and after the implementation of the preventive programme. They also rated the programme itself. There was a total of 630 student responses prior to the implementation and 614 responses to the implementation of the programme. Subsequently, the average responses of each class were worked on with respect to data collection. It was not possible to match the responses of individual students, only those of individual classes. In addition, the school prevention methodologists who led the classroom programmes also commented on the implementation of the programmes. The students chose their answers to each statement from a scale from 1 to 4 (1 – False, 2 – Partially true, 3 – Rather true, 4 – Completely true).

The data obtained showed a normal distribution; the Kolmogor-Smirn test was used for verification. The attitude questionnaire was evaluated using the t-test for two dependent samples by means of the SPSS statistical program. A 5% margin of error was chosen for data evaluation (*Table 1*). The evaluated data sets can be considered representative (given the age of the students, their gender, and the types of schools).

The difference in the average responses of the selected group of students between the first and second rounds of questioning was evaluated (*Table 2, Table 3*). The following groups were involved: all students, girls, boys, students completing the shorter programme, students completing the longer programme, students in middle or lower secondary schools, and secondary school students.

	Students	Girls	Boys	Middle School	Secondary School	Blocks 4 & 6	Block 3
Statement 1	2.88 < 2.92 p=0.288	2.95 > 2.86 p=0.171	2.81 < 2.97 p=0.054	2.93 > 2.88 p=0.247	2.83 < 3.04 p=0.090	2.92 > 2.88 p=0.351	2.88 < 2.99 p=0.050*
Statement 2	2.80 < 2.82 p=0.321	2.81 > 2.80 p=0.482	2.89 > 2.82 p=0.235	2.81 < 2.83 p=0.366	2.80 < 2.88 p=0.161	2.87 > 2.85 p=0.420	2.75 < 2.84 p=0.133
Statement 3	2.49 < 2.57 p=0.074	2.50 < 2.52 p=0.409	2.49 < 2.64 p=0.020*	2.50 < 2.61 p=0.037*	2.49 < 2.55 p=0.337	2.45 < 2.61 p=0.020*	2.54 < 2.56 p=0.405
Statement 4	2.68 < 2.71 p=0.314	2.73 > 2.66 p=0.254	2.65 < 2.77 p=0.070	2.70 < 2.76 p=0.159	2.68 > 2.63 p=0.388	2.69 < 2.78 p=0.109	2.72 > 2.68 p=0.490
Statement 4	2.75 > 2.73 p=0.311	2.71 > 2.66 p=0.309	2.87 > 2.83 p=0.288	2.79 > 2.72 p=0.069	2.76 > 2.72 p=0.328	2.77 > 2.73 p=0.262	2.81 > 2.71 p=0.027*
Statement 6	3.00 > 2.83 p=0.008**	2.88 > 2.72 p=0.052	3.08 > 2.97 p=0.042*	2.93 > 2.86 p=0.060	2.94 > 2.79 p=0.150	2.96 > 2.79 p=0.001**	2.92 = 2.92 p=0.470
Statement 7	2.73 < 2.80 p=0.029*	2.66 < 2.72 p=0.187	2.82 < 2.95 p=0.037*	2.73 < 2.84 p=0.008**	2.67 < 2.77 p=0.100	2.78 < 2.85 p=0.068	2.69 < 2.80 p=0.021*
Statement 8	3.15 < 3.18 p=0.296	3.19 < 3.23 p=0.288	3.09 > 3.08 p=0.463	3.19 > 3.17 p=0.376	3.04 < 3.16 p=0.064	3.16 > 3.12 p=0.290	3.13 < 3.20 p=0.187
Statement 9	2.70 < 2.75 p=0.138	2.66 < 2.67 p=0.401	2.76 < 2.84 p=0.140	2.71 = 2.71 p=0.490	2.71 < 2.84 p=0.185	2.68 < 2.72 p=0.246	2.75 < 2.78 p=0.349
Statement 10	2.75 < 2.77 p=0.293	2.72 < 2.75 p=0.321	2.83 > 2.81 p=0.389	2.78 < 2.80 p=0.432	2.66 < .77 p=0.132	2.79 < 2.83 p=0.340	2.70 < 2.73 p=0.180

\* Differences are significant at the 0.05 level.  
 \*\* Differences are significant at the 0.01 level.

**Table 1** | Summary of statistically significant changes in the averages of responses of all groups under study – Attitude Questionnaire

1 <sup>st</sup> Questionnaire / 2 <sup>nd</sup> Questionnaire	Students	Girls	Boys			Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Statement 1	70%/74%	70%/71%	<b>70%/77%</b>	Statement 1	T1	2.8836	31	0.24061
Statement 2	62%/64%	60%/63%	64%/65%		T2	2.9178	31	0.31585
Statement 3	48%/56%	44%/52%	<b>54%/61%</b>	Statement 2	T1	2.7983	31	0.27952
Statement 4	60%/64%	59%/59%	62%/69%		T2	2.8218	31	0.31595
Statement 5	61%/61%	56%/56%	67%/68%	Statement 3	T1	2.4942	31	0.24998
Statement 6	<b>72%/66%</b>	<b>68%/60%</b>	<b>76%/72%</b>		T2	2.5737	31	0.35129
Statement 7	<b>57%/65%</b>	50%/59%	<b>65%/74%</b>	Statement 4	T1	2.6811	31	0.26651
Statement 8	74%/76%	78%/79%	70%/74%		T2	2.7064	31	0.26551
Statement 9	60%/66%	53%/62%	68%/73%	Statement 5	T1	2.751	31	0.26391
Statement 10	63%/66%	59%/62%	68%/72%		T2	2.7269	31	0.25052
				Statement 6 *	T1	2.9556	31	0.2241
					T2	2.8297	31	0.29345
				Statement 7 *	T1	2.7231	31	0.31536
					T2	2.7998	31	0.27549
				Statement 8	T1	3.1528	31	0.33335
					T2	3.1801	31	0.34811
				Statement 9	T1	2.7026	31	0.21216
					T2	2.7462	31	0.18558
				Statement 10	T1	2.7445	31	0.25314
					T2	2.774	31	0.2561

**Table 2** | Changes in percentage of consensus responses in the first and second interviews (statistically significant responses are highlighted)

\* A statistically significant change in the mean response was found.

**Table 3** | Differences in averages of students' responses to the first and second questionnaires – Attitude Questionnaire

## 2.4 Intervention

According to its authors, the programme is suitable for students aged 13 to 19. It has been pilot-tested in the Czech Republic and other European countries. The programme is designed to appeal to students through its form. It assumes that given the age of the target group, students already possess enough information about risky behaviour and that their attitudes and the influence of their peers should be used. The main medium used in the programme is a series of videos consisting of 25 episodes. These episodes are divided into six units that correspond to the six thematic blocks of the programme. The storyline of the series is conceived in such a way that only some blocks can be utilized, but its impact is not changed. The series is animated, mostly monochrome, using colours only to highlight specific and important situations. The series is not tied to a particular language. The dialogues between the characters are mostly non-verbal. What is important is the behaviour of the characters in different situations, when they express their opinion or attitude to a particular topic. Music is also an important aspect, as it is unique to each character. Some of the elements of the music are in tune, others are cacophonous. This is to indicate the relationships between the individual characters. The action takes place in locations which are well known and familiar to the target group (street, park, disco, etc.).

Each block of the programme begins with a look at the relevant section of the series, followed by specific activities, described in detail in the methodology. The programme implementer decides to what extent he/she wants to focus on the topic and can adjust the programme accordingly. Some topics are mandatory; others may be omitted. The programme includes activities for three to 18 lessons (three to six thematic blocks).

The programme is led by a school prevention methodologist or a teacher who has been trained in this method (e.g. as part of a specialization course for school prevention methodologists), but this is not a prerequisite. The programme materials are designed to provide the teacher with appropriate information and guidance for them to be able to implement the programme without the need for additional training.

The videos of the internet series are freely available at [www.boysandgirlsplus.eu](http://www.boysandgirlsplus.eu). Other materials and detailed methodology (also in Czech) can also be downloaded from the site.

Programme description in terms of content, goals, and activities:

### Block 1 – Question of Attitude. It's up to you!

*Focus:* Attitude

*Life skills developed in this block:* Self-awareness, decision making, emotion management, and interpersonal relationships

*Goals:*

- Getting to Know the Internet Series Characters (Watching Videos)
- Show how different attitudes can lead to different lifestyles (Group analysis and discussion)
- Formulate Your Own Conclusions on the Importance of Attitudes (Role Playing in Pairs)
- Focusing on your own attitudes and analysing them and their consequences in life (Self-analysis)

### Block 2 – Drugs, Decision Making, and Peer Pressure

*Focus:* Drugs, decision making, and peer pressure

*Life skills developed in this block:* Self-awareness, decision making, emotion management, and interpersonal relationships

*Goals:*

- Getting to Know the Internet Series Characters (Watching Videos)
- Show how different attitudes can lead to different lifestyles (Group analysis and discussion)
- Formulate Your Own Conclusions on the Importance of Attitudes (Creating a story of how to resist peer pressure through drug use decision making)
- (Role Playing in Pairs)
- Focusing on your own attitudes and analysing them and their consequences in life (Self-analysis)
- Identify bad decisions and how peer pressure was involved. Clarify how emotions and motivations are related to peer pressure and decision making (Decision making and mind maps)

### Block 3 – What about drugs?

*Focus:* Drugs

*Life skills developed in this block:* Self-awareness, critical thinking, creative thinking, and decision making

*Goals:*

- To show drug-related situations and effects (Watching Videos)
- Provide information on the effects of drugs, including body changes and mood changes (Teacher Presentation)
- Reflect on the motives young people have to use drugs and promote alternative leisure activities (Classroom Discussion)
- Reflect on your personal leisure habits regarding drug use and motivation (Proposal for a structured interview on leisure habits)

### Block 4 – This is my choice!

*Focus:* Decision making

*Life skills developed in this block:* Self-awareness, decision making, and emotion management.

*Goals:*

- Show decision-making situations and what happens when barriers and feelings related to them occur (Watching Videos)
- Analyse why decision making is important for each of us to achieve the lifestyle we desire and show how to overcome obstacles in achieving life goals (Group discussion and presentation of conclusions)
- Learn about values and motivations that influence the decision-making process (Group Discussion)
- Learn about your own decision-making process (Filling a decision template)

**Block 5 – Me and My Surroundings**

*Focus:* Peer pressure

*Life skills developed in this block:* Self-awareness, empathy, assertive communication, interpersonal relationships, emotion management, and stress management

*Goals:*

- Show different situations in which peer pressure is present (Watch Video)
- Learn how peer pressure and our normal beliefs are reflected in some life decisions (Video Analysis and Group Discussion)
- Reflect on situations where peer pressure is present and encourage the acquisition of the necessary means to manage it (Creating a Story)
- Promote loyalty to what you want to do and how you want to do it. Emphasize the value of the group as an enriching element that can provide support and assistance in difficult times (Working in small groups and sharing ideas)

**Block 6 – Lifestyle and Future**

*Focus:* Lifestyle and Future

*Life skills developed in this block:* Self-awareness, empathy, assertive communication, interpersonal relationships, emotion management, decision making and problem solving.

*Goals:*

- Show the consequences of decisions and how they can become a way of life (Watching Videos)
- Analyse why decision making is important for achieving the desired lifestyle, and show how to overcome obstacles in achieving life goals (Group Discussion)
- Learn to cope with emotional “slumps”. Encourage autonomous decision making, fulfilment of our own goals and consistency in achieving them (Sketching a mind map of future plans)
- Strengthen self-confidence and support positive social networks as a source of support (Capturing Future Plans in the Mind Map. Providing Feedback to and Receiving from Others)

**● 3 RESULTS****3.1 Results of the Attitude Questionnaire**

The students in our study already had good knowledge of addiction-specific issues when entering the programme, so the programme did not provide them with new information on this topic. This is not surprising, given the age at which the students experienced the programme. They had the opportunity to acquire the basic information about addictive substances and their effects in lower grades. However, the programme enabled the students to discuss different topics and work on developing their skills (e.g. in decision making).

**List of items in the Attitude Questionnaire**

- When I encounter obstacles, I find the means to go my own way.
- I won't let others influence me.
- Setbacks and despair will not affect my life goals.
- In general, I have no problems achieving my goals and aims.
- I am confident that I can cope with surprising events.
- I am always aware of my own feelings.
- In most cases I know completely what I want for myself.
- I know exactly where to find support and help when I'm in trouble.
- When there is a new challenge ahead, I know how to deal with it.
- Normally, it is easy for me to make the right decision.

**The programme was most powerful in the following four areas:**

- The programme taught students how to choose strategies to solve problems they encounter, i.e. how to stay on the path they have set for the shortest implementation of the programme (i.e. three blocks).
- The programme strengthened the students' life goals, most notably in the younger students and boys, in whom the impact was strongest. With the longer programme implementation (four and six blocks), the programme already had this effect on all the students (regardless of gender).
- The programme sensitized the students to their own feelings. The students probably started to notice their feelings more and thus they were even more aware that they were not always sure what was happening in them.
- The programme taught students to perceive their needs better and realize what they want to achieve. We see a connection between this point and the aforementioned information about the affirmation of the students' life goals.

The Boys and Girls Plus prevention programme proved to be most effective for the boys and girls in middle schools. The secondary school students did not show any statistically significant results. The clearest benefit of this programme is in the area of general primary prevention of risky behaviour, which is mainly evident in the affirmation of students' life goals. Significant changes were achieved for Statements 1, 3, 6, and 7. In Statements 1 (“If I am faced with an obstacle, I find a means to help me to go my own way.”), 3 (“Failures and

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Statement 1	T1	2.9499	31	0.38483
	T2	2.8635	31	0.45917
Statement 2	T1	2.8059	31	0.45315
	T2	2.801	31	0.4551
Statement 3	T1	2.4955	31	0.41137
	T2	2.515	31	0.45547
Statement 4	T1	2.7253	31	0.38991
	T2	2.6619	31	0.36552
Statement 5	T1	2.7071	31	0.4518
	T2	2.655	31	0.4488
Statement 6*	T1	2.8847	31	0.43443
	T2	2.723	31	0.54434
Statement 7	T1	2.6571	31	0.47326
	T2	2.7148	31	0.50316
Statement 8	T1	3.1869	31	0.44107
	T2	3.2302	31	0.46341
Statement 9	T1	2.6574	31	0.41273
	T2	2.6731	31	0.37117
Statement 10	T1	2.7158	31	0.45867
	T2	2.747	31	0.3031

\* A statistically significant change in the mean response was found.

**Table 4 |** Differences in averages of girls' responses in the first and second interviews – Attitude Questionnaire

troubles do not affect my life goals.”), and 7 (“In most cases I am absolutely sure what I want for myself.”), the students' responses (particularly among the boys) were statistically significantly higher in the second round of questioning than in the first (Table 4, Table 5). Statement 6 in the second questionnaire (“I am almost always aware of my own feelings”) yielded answers showing a statistically significantly lower average. This outcome was the only one which grew worse (in all the focus groups). However, this worsening could be due to wider perspectives and closer self-examination, which are desirable elements in prevention efforts.

It should be noted that after the implementation of the programme there was an increase in the rate of positive answers to all the statements, with the exception of the aforementioned Statement 6. However, the increase is statistically significant only for Statement 7 (“In most cases I am absolutely sure what I want for myself.”).

The attitude questionnaire was focused more on the examination of non-specific areas of the prevention programme, or rather, skills for life. Therefore, in total the results show the efficiency of the programme in the area of the improvement of skills for life, rather than in the area of specific general primary prevention. The questionnaire was compiled by foreign authors purely for the purpose of this evaluation.

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Statement 1	T1	2.8106	30	0.32431
	T2	2.9662	30	0.41263
Statement 2	T1	2.8792	30	0.38028
	T2	2.8153	30	0.40298
Statement 3*	T1	2.4936	30	0.2989
	T2	2.6411	30	0.37042
Statement 4	T1	2.6484	30	0.39583
	T2	2.7747	30	0.31138
Statement 5	T1	2.8694	30	0.32541
	T2	2.8318	30	0.29067
Statement 6*	T1	3.0816	30	0.31645
	T2	2.9722	30	0.38514
Statement 7*	T1	2.8226	30	0.41588
	T2	2.945	30	0.25659
Statement 8	T1	3.0919	30	0.50072
	T2	3.0819	30	0.55999
Statement 9	T1	2.7644	30	0.35733
	T2	2.8388	30	0.35817
Statement 10	T1	2.8289	30	0.30305
	T2	2.805	30	0.424

\* A statistically significant change in the mean response was found.

**Table 5 |** Differences in the averages of boys' responses in the first and second interviews – Attitude Questionnaire

Its validity and reliability have not yet been tested, which slightly reduces the significance of the results.

### 3.2 European Results

The provisional and unpublished results from June 2016 bring the first information about the efficiency of the programme from the perspective of the evaluation of all the European data. The Czech Republic submitted almost a third of all the completed questionnaires and therefore greatly influenced the general European results.

The European results show that the younger the students were, the more information they learned from the programme (mainly in the area of information about addictive substances and how others influence our decision making). Younger students generally agreed that they learned to make correct decisions thanks to the programme, but their general understanding of the tasks was worse than was the case with older students. No significant benefit for the older students was observed. The girls gave the programme significantly higher ratings than the boys did.

One of the main aims of the programme was more “negative” answers to the question concerning the significance of

alcohol. However, there was no difference in the answers to this question (in all categories).

### 3.3 Evaluation of the programme by students

To evaluate their satisfaction with the programme, the students were asked to rate 15 statements pertaining to the programme. The same rating scale as in the attitude questionnaire was used.

The list of entries in the questionnaire:

- I learned many new things in the Boys and Girls Plus programme.
- I understood well what the stories in the series were about.
- The stories in the series are representative of the lives of young people today.
- I understood well the tasks and exercises during teamwork.
- The time dedicated to discussions and exercises was sufficient.
- I felt good during the team discussions and exercises.
- The discussions and exercises were informative and inspiring.
- Participation in the discussions and exercises was not too stressful for me.
- I learned new things about drugs and their impact in the Boys and Girls Plus programme.
- The Boys and Girls Plus programme showed me how positive approaches can be beneficial for my life.
- In the Boys and Girls Plus programme I learned something about how other people can influence my decisions.
- In the Boys and Girls Plus programme I learned to make correct decisions.
- In the Boys and Girls Plus programme I learned new ways to make up my mind and decide.
- Through the Boys and Girls Plus programme I looked at my life and learned something about myself.
- Things I learned in the Boys and Girls Plus programme will be useful for my future life.

For the majority of the students, the life stories of the young people presented in the programme were highly realistic and relatable. Overall, the students evaluated the programme as very comprehensible.

We emphasize only the difference between the girls and boys in the students' evaluations of the programme. This difference was remarkable in the evaluations on the European level, but not so for the Czech Republic.

More than half of the students (57%) did not view the programme as beneficial in terms of acquiring new information; however, almost three-quarters responded that the discussions and exercises were informative and thought-provoking. 62% of the students did not learn anything new about drugs and their effects. This data demonstrates that secondary school students are already well informed about the subject matter presented and that it is possible to concen-

trate more on changing certain positions and perceptions than on providing information.

Over half of the students stated that the programme had not taught them to make the right decisions (14 classes, however, did not undergo the programme aimed at good decision making). 53% of the students stated that they had not learned new ways to contemplate and make decisions. 75% of the students had learned about the influences others can have on their decision making. Almost three-quarters of the students stated that the Boys and Girls Plus programme had demonstrated the advantages of positive attitudes in life. 61% of the students thought that the things they had learned in the Boys and Girls Plus programme would be useful for them in their lives. It is thus evident that the subjective benefit of the programme for students is their realization of the strong influence others (especially peers) have upon their decisions, especially in challenging situations when they often do not decide for themselves.

### 3.4 Evaluation of the programme by prevention methodologists

The prevention methodologists stated that the aims of the programme were first and foremost to hold discussions with students, improve their awareness about addictive substances, change attitudes towards addictive substances, and demonstrate how to resist peer pressure. The methodologists were successful in capturing the students' attention with videos and leading discussions. They were not successful in adhering to the programme's timetable of activities. Some students had problems relating to the characters in the series, or with understanding the storyline (too-short videos interrupted by credit titles after each episode). Overall, the methodologists were successful in fulfilling their aims in whole or in part. We consider the attitude and approach of the individual methodologists towards the programme and students to be highly important and a major factor in ensuring the effectiveness of the programme. Thus, it is not possible to say that the programme is in itself successful; suitable instructors are required in classrooms. The programme itself and the materials for it can in no way guarantee successful results. It is evident from the student responses that a school prevention instructor's ability to lead a group of students has a very large impact. A safe and relaxed environment is important for students to cooperate and feel good in the programme. The Czech school prevention instructors were successful in this area as the students evaluated the discussions as not being too stressful and the spaces allocated for the programme adequate. The atmosphere in the classrooms appears to have encouraged students to participate actively in the programme and, therefore, the primary prevention intervention can be evaluated as successful.

## ● 4 DISCUSSION

The programme fulfils the majority of the basic principles of prevention (Martanová, 2012). The programme is continual, combines various strategies, is systematic, uses bona fide information and forms of influence upon the target group, and deals with various areas of risky behaviour. The programme is oriented towards positivity, attempts to demonstrate the advantages of a healthy lifestyle, and uses the KAB model of peer elements, de-normalization of risky behaviour, and promoting protective factors in society.

The form and content of the Boys and Girls Plus programme is undoubtedly attractive for students. The video series is made in such a way as to be appealing. The animated series with specific graphics and the use of colour catches students' attention. The music is chosen to suit the atmosphere of the surroundings and the individual characters. For most students the stories of young people are presented in a realistic way and for them it was very realistic and contemporary. In general, the students evaluated the programme as being very comprehensible.

Upon starting the programme, the students already had good knowledge about various types of addiction. Therefore, the programme did not provide them with new information on this subject. This is not surprising considering the age of the students when they participated. The programme nevertheless enabled the students to discuss various issues and to work on the development of their skills (e.g. in the area of decision making).

When starting the programme, the majority of the students had a high level of self-efficacy and, therefore, reached what is called the ceiling effect. The programme would be more effective with more vulnerable groups whose levels of self-efficacy were lower. The programme was initially conceived for groups of children from worse socio-economic backgrounds and realized in low-threshold facilities. The programme has a greater impact upon individuals who are more susceptible and exposed to the given issues than more stable students.

The analysis of the results indicates that the programme is most effective with younger boys (in middle school and the first years of secondary school). For this group skills for life training proved to be particularly important. In this area, no statistical progress was registered for the girls. Langmeier and Krejčířová (2006) concluded that the perceivable differences in development between boys and girls were mostly relative. Thus, the results made it impossible to conclude that girls were more socially mature or more capable than boys.

The evaluation of the results indicates that even a short-term intervention (three blocks) teaches students how to choose methods for following their own path and their own way towards their chosen aims and goals when confronted with obstacles. However, at the same time, it is also more likely to raise doubts within students as to whether they would be able to cope with unexpected negative events. Furthermore,

the programme does not demonstrate such tendencies. It is probable that the programme sensitizes students and forces them to think more about situations which could arise. The students had the opportunity to consider their perception of situations and their own emotions, which probably resulted in them improving their reflective skills. Even with a short intervention, the programme helped the students realize what they wanted in life. The programme taught the younger students and boys, especially, to consider their needs and be better at resisting potential peer pressure. It appears that with the programme we were successful in encouraging adherence to life goals which the younger students set for themselves. The longer the programme, the better the outcomes. We see this aspect as being one of the strongest areas of the programme.

The programme also had subjective benefits for the students. They stated that they recognized the advantages of a healthy lifestyle and that for the majority this was the main thing they learned. In terms of general primary prevention of risky behaviour, the most obvious benefit of the programme was the reinforcement of the participating students' life goals.

The Boys and Girls Plus primary preventive programme has various strengths, one of the main ones being its very form. The animated internet series is very appealing to students while maintaining a comprehensive nature. This form of communication is natural to them, and during the programme, there were no problems with keeping the students focused on the subject matter. The programme was found successful in encouraging the students to discuss various prevention-specific topics in a natural way.

The programme covers (and goes beyond) the recommended number of hours that should be dedicated to general primary prevention under the School Prevention Programme (for 13-to-15-year-olds, according to the recommended structure of such programmes (Miovský, Aujezká, Burešová, et al., 2015, p. 53).

The results of the study reveal that the form of the programme appeals to the current generation of young people, in part thanks to the use of modern technology in primary prevention programmes. The results also point out some specific issues for prevention programmes, e.g. high-risk sexual behaviour, which have not been studied in detail yet. Vondráčková (in Blinka, 2015), for example, noted that, in practice, there was a lack of effective programmes to prevent dependence on the internet that fulfil framework prevention criteria. This serves as a great inspiration for the future development of prevention activities.

## ● 5 LIMITATIONS OF THE SURVEY

The evaluation has some weak points in several areas. One significant weakness seems to be the unsuitable choice of actual evaluation materials, namely the attitude questionnaire. Since the programme is presented as comprehensive



specific primary prevention of risky behaviour, the evaluation materials should be focused in this direction in order to look into specific areas. However, the focus of the attitude questionnaire is rather non-specific and, apart from attitudes, predominantly maps skills for life. There is only one question focused on a specific (addiction-related) area – “Alcohol will most probably be an indispensable part of my life.” We find this question very problematic and ambiguous and thus we did not consider this question in our survey as it is not clear why the authors of the questionnaire chose it. The question is so broad and general that none of the answers indicate what the student actually means. Additionally, the answer to this question is closely linked to the cultural background, and the Czech Republic is a country where alcohol has deep historical traditions and the one which features the highest consumption of beer per capita in the world.

Therefore, the evaluation was more focused on ascertaining the efficiency of the programme in the area of the cultivation of skills for life rather than specific areas of prevention.

Another disadvantage of the design of the survey was the impossibility of matching the answers of individual students because the students stated only their sex and class. It was possible to match only groups of boys and groups of girls or a group of individual classes (more specifically, the averages of their answers) but not specific individuals. Therefore, all the evaluations were made on the basis of

average answers. Potential significant divergences among students that were possibly influenced by the programme could not be identified. Nevertheless, some statistically significant outcomes were observed.

A further weak point is the fact that the survey did not feature a control group, and other external variables which could have affected the efficiency of the programme were not ascertained. This can reduce the validity of the overall results.

It is difficult to estimate the extent to which the effectiveness of the programme could be attributed to the programme itself and to what extent it was influenced by the moderators, i.e. the prevention methodologists who led the programmes in the classes. The overall effectiveness of the programme can be influenced considerably, either positively or negatively, by the personality of the programme moderator (Gabrhelík, in Miovský, Adámková, & Barták, 2015).

## ● 6 CONCLUSION

The pilot evaluation of the Boys and Girls Plus programme confirmed that it is possible to implement the prevention programme in the Czech Republic. The Boys and Girls Plus programme ranks among the international programmes that have been successfully adapted to the Czech setting.

**Authors' contribution:** Veronika Pavlas Martanová initiated and designed the study. She led Anna Fromberger as her thesis supervisor. Anna Fromberger conducted the statistical analyses and participated in the interpretation of the data and preparation of the manuscript. They both worked together on the literature search and summary of relevant evidence. Both authors contributed to the article and approved the final form of the manuscript.

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