



# Be Kind To Your Mind



Erasmus+ Youth Exchange Project

Aug 27th - Sep 3rd, 2021  
Istanbul, Turkey

**Project Handbook**

# About the project



Be Kind To Your Mind is an Erasmus+ KA105 youth exchange project funded by the Turkish National Agency.



35 young people from Turkey, Hungary, Latvia, Romania, Portugal and Bulgaria gathered in Şile municipality of Istanbul, Turkey from 27th of August to 3rd of September 2021 to join this joyous action to learn about mindfulness, physical & mental health balance, Erasmus+, friendship, and cooperation.



Non-formal learning techniques have been utilized to make this learning action work.

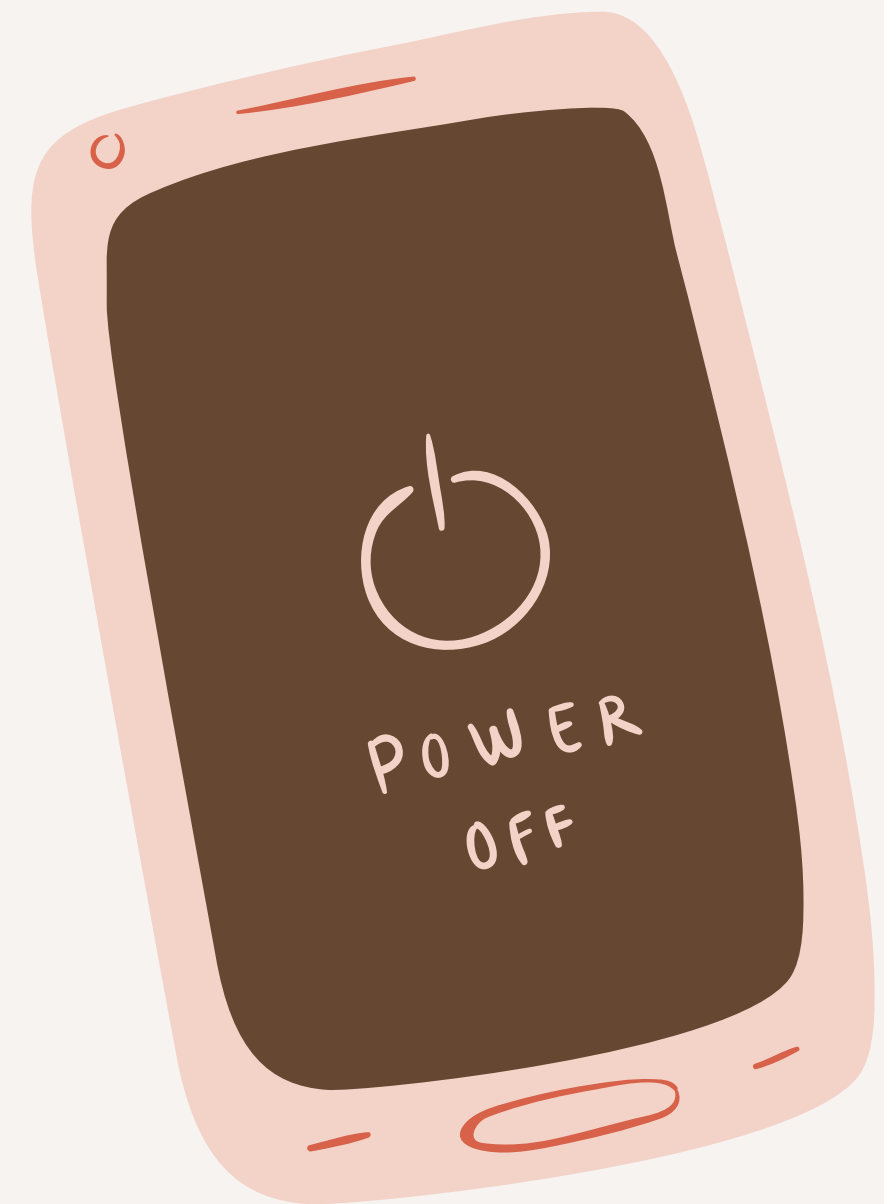


# The goals and aims of the project

This project aims to bring **awareness** to young people about mental health. The logic behind the project supports **empowering** young people to stand up and take action to protect their mental health, to practice mindfulness activities, to spread knowledge and experience to their surroundings about the importance of physical and mental **balance**.

## **We care about:**

- Allowing young people from all backgrounds to have access to mental health knowledge and strategies to improve their mental state
- Helping young people build gratitude for what they have, and achieve what they can do better and further
- Achieving European Union mental health goals across Europe and neighbouring countries for a better society.





# The Organizing Team



Melis Karabulut

Legal Representative of  
Health Lust Union & Main  
Project Coordinator



Onur Öbekcan

Co-Coordinator



Miray Akça

Logistics Manager &  
Consultant for Local  
Partnerships and  
Stakeholders



# About the organization



Health Lust Union was founded in 2017 as a non-formal youth organization in Istanbul, Turkey.



Health Lust Union aims to improve the physical and mental health of economically and socially disadvantaged young people in Turkey. Its activities also aim at elevating young people's lives, their international competencies, and their participation in Erasmus+ opportunities.



Health Lust Union organized and participated several youth exchange projects in Turkey and Europe, and continues its online and offline local activities as well.

# Guest Trainers



Gülben Aykaç

Mandala Instructor



Şengül Demir

Laughter Therapy Instructor



Gamze Saba

Yoga Instructor

# The History of the Project

Be Kind to Your Mind was approved by the Turkish National Agency in late December 2019, and was planned to take place in April 2020. With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, our organization was saddened by the postponement of the project to 2021, yet we still kept on working.

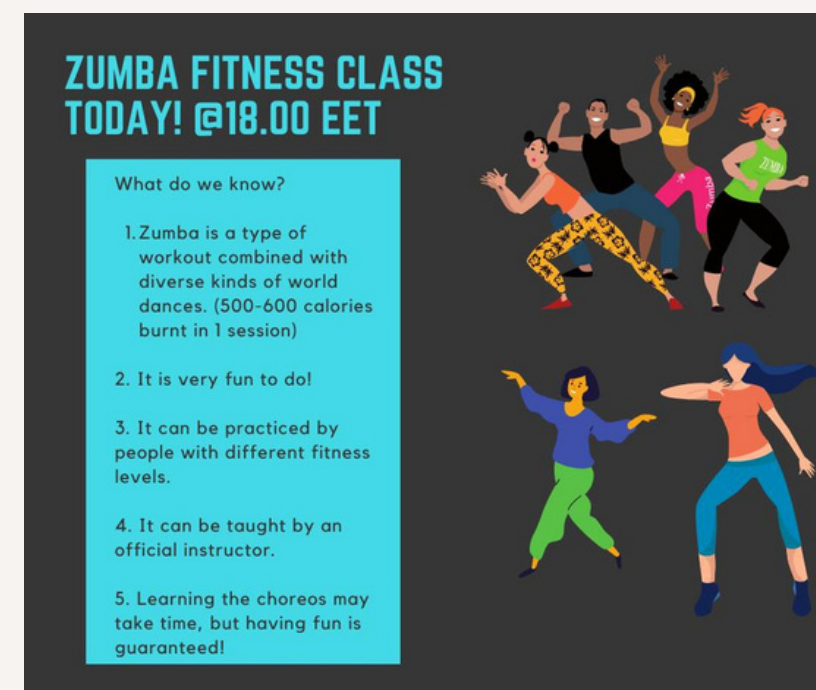
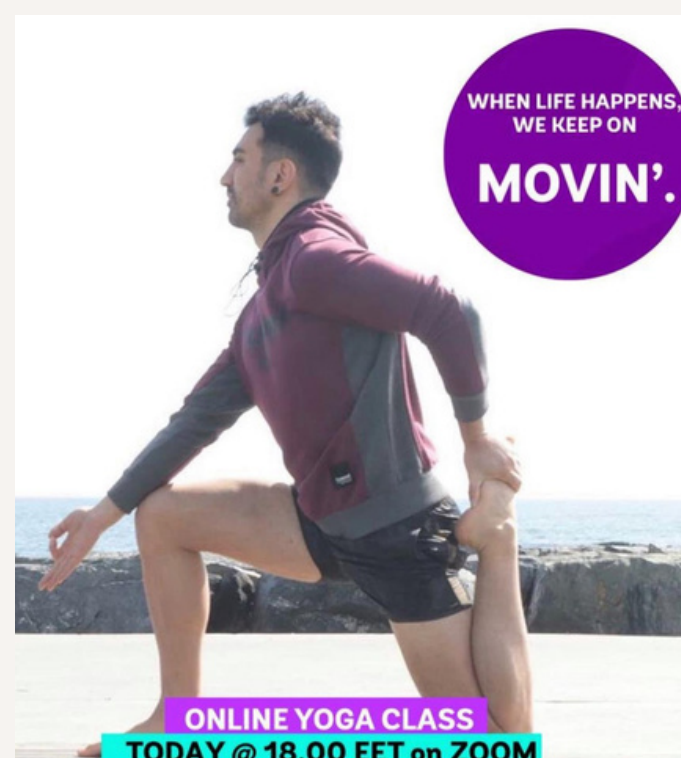


To include young people from all over Europe, we have organized a virtual Be Kind to Your Mind in April 2020, having several activities during the day to keep young people motivated and empowered during the first shock of the pandemic.



# The History of the Project

During the online exchange, we organized many virtual activities such as cultural nights, sharing traditional recipes and trying them out; or online yoga and Zumba lessons, practicing gratitude, journaling, creative writing, movie nights, etc. From far away and from home, we still managed to connect in our ways for this beautiful cause.





# Now

After almost two years of waiting for the day to come for an in-person meeting with our participants, we finally managed to make it happen! In Summer 2021, in this mindful place secluded from the buzz and fuzz of Istanbul, we welcomed our participants from many countries!



In this handbook, we will tell you about what we did for a week to be kind to our minds. We hope that you find something for yourself here; some strategies to keep your mental health strong, some new ideas to embark on, and maybe some motivation from the cheerful energy of our participants to take a step towards mindfulness.



**The mantra of our  
action is...**

**Staying healthy in mind and  
body is essential, especially  
in this current state of the  
world.**

**Let's take action for  
ourselves!**







# What is mental health?

Our participants have made different definitions around the term.

## **Mental health is...**

- Inner & outer space
- Emotional resonance
- Awareness of how we feel, act, react, think
- Accepting oneself
- Balance
- Listening to your needs
- Facing problems rather than undermining them

## **Mental health is NOT...**

- The absence of a bad feeling
- Being positive all the time



# Why is protecting our mental health important?



Our well-being is important no matter the circumstance or state of the world.



Self-care helps us manage stress better and allows us to be more productive. Taking care of ourselves helps us keep a good work-life balance.



WHAT ARE THE  
STRATEGIES TO  
STAY MENTALLY  
HEALTHY?

OUR PARTICIPANTS  
WILL HELP YOU  
FIND OUT...







# Mental health practices can look different for everyone.

Our participants have suggested various great strategies to protect mental health.

- Finding "your" meditation
- Listening to the needs of your body and soul
- Positive self talk
- Having a mantra
- Considering the possibility of things working out
- Having a pet or plant
- Having "me" time
- Shutting off from distractions
- Arts
- Journaling thoughts and feelings
- Seeing the good in bad





# Finding your ways will make habits sustainable.

Our participants have suggested various great strategies to protect mental health.

- Traveling
- Socializing yet charging your social batteries as well
- Cooking, cleaning
- Connecting with nature
- Workout (yoga, hiking, dancing, etc.)
- Listening to music
- A good shower or bath
- Practicing gratitude
- Sleeping
- Talking to someone and/or getting professional help
- Driving



# There is at least one thing you can do to be more mindful & make your day meaningful.

Our participants have suggested various great strategies to protect mental health.

- Praying
- Crying
- Reading
- Having hobbies
- Detox from social media
- Learning more about mental health and coping mechanisms
- Following useful social media accounts



HOW DID WE TRY  
TO IMPROVE OUR  
AWARENESS TO THE  
DAILY FLOW OF  
LIFE, OUR MENTAL  
WELL-BEING AND  
TO THE GROUP  
DYNAMICS?

OUR PARTICIPANTS  
WILL SHOW YOU...





# Discovering your surroundings in a mindful way...

- Build a positive connection with a local person. Ask about their day, try to speak a few words with them, make them smile. Be kind to them, offer them something.
- Find a comfortable, relaxing place and spend some time there. Think about life, or simply let your mind wander.
- Sit on a bench, and watch people. How do they look? What is their mood? What kind of energy do you get from them?





# Taking an inner journey with Mandala...

- With the leadership of our Mandala instructor Gülben Aykaç, our participants joined a workshop about mandala's role as a tool in mindfulness, relaxation, and getting to know ourselves.
- Our participants were delivered a circle template and colored pencils to simply draw, without thinking about making a beautiful piece of art, rather than taking this time to simply sit with themselves and let colors move their minds.
- After an hour of drawing, Ms. Aykaç gave some feedback about some of the mandalas that our participants created, and told them about the importance of approaching the mandala-making with an intention, to resolve problems, and also to simply understand our minds in a better way.





# Connecting mind and body with Yoga...

- With the leadership of our Yoga instructor Gamze Saba, our participants experienced a great way to connect with their bodies and relax their minds, along with doing breathwork to better regulate their metabolisms.



- Our yoga instructor did a great job explaining the benefits of yoga and exercise, in general, to help young people make movement a part of their lives for more sustainable mindfulness.





# And stretching & connecting with nature...





# Countless times of meditation and breath work...



- With the leadership of our trainer Melis Karabulut, our participants experienced the beauty in meditation as they started a new day, in the middle of a day when they needed to relax, and after a long day of work, with or without intentions, by simply opening their lungs and minds.

- Our trainer helped us see that even a five-minute meditation can change so much in our focus, stress levels and ability to take on tasks. These meditations helped participants internalize their mindfulness journey through the project days.





# Therapy of Laughter, to shake worries off!



- Our Therapy of Laughter instructor Şengül Demir guided us through a very energetic workshop, in which our participants experimented with laughing exercises – mostly for no reason!
- Using music and dance, our participants practiced laughing, letting things go and learning to lose stressful thoughts in a fun way.
- In the end of the activity, our instructor guided us into a short meditation to calm the nerves, and reflect back at our worries and anxious thoughts.





# Developing gratitude through writing...



- Our participants had several activities through the project that guided them into developing more gratitude towards their lives, opportunities, themselves and their loved ones.
- As an example, we asked our participants to write a gratitude letter that they dedicate to someone, or an experience, a life lesson, or even an object in their life that mattered to them and taught them good things in life.
- This activity helped our participants see the ways to appreciate small things in life, and go deeper with their gratitude work. It is important to give the tasks to the participants precisely in this activity and let them work individually.



# Creative Drama for awareness...



- This activity takes the case of a child whose dreams were ignored or almost killed by one of his parents. The story is based on a 6 year old child who sees a dragon in a cloud and tells that to his father and gets a disappointing reaction from the father.
- The participants tried to imagine this child in the age of 12, 25 and 40. They improvised the case and played it. A discussion and evaluation of the drama activity should follow in order to get the learning outcome out of it and to reflect on how different groups imagine and perceive the rise or fall of creativity from the same base of a story.



# Cultural Nights...





# Useful Links & Sources

- **Guided Meditation:**

<https://josierobinson.com/journal/gratitude-meditation>

- **A great source for writing activities:**

<https://daveursillo.com/7-mindful-writing-prompts/>

- **Great sources to read more on mindfulness:**

<https://www.mindful.org/five-steps-to-mindfulness/>

<https://www.mynourishedhome.com/achieve-mindfulness/>

<https://www.heysigmund.com/different-ways-to-practice.../>

<https://positivepsychology.com/gratitude-exercises/>

- **To follow**

1. <https://www.instagram.com/the.holistic.psychologist/>

2. <https://www.instagram.com/tracymcmillan/> (my very favorite)

3. <https://www.instagram.com/sunnybloominspiration/>

4. [https://www.instagram.com/\\_lisaolivera/](https://www.instagram.com/_lisaolivera/)

5. [https://www.instagram.com/notesfromyourtherapist/...](https://www.instagram.com/notesfromyourtherapist/)

- **More Erasmus+ opportunities**

**a. Solidarity Corps:** [https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity\\_en](https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en)

**b. Youth Exchanges:** [https://ec.europa.eu/.../young-people/youth-exchanges\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/.../young-people/youth-exchanges_en)

**c. Training Courses:** [https://ec.europa.eu/.../mobility-projects-youth-workers\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/.../mobility-projects-youth-workers_en)

**d. Erasmus+ Internships:**

[https://ec.europa.eu/.../opportu.../traineeships-students\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/.../opportu.../traineeships-students_en)

**A good website to check internships:**

<https://erasmusintern.org/>

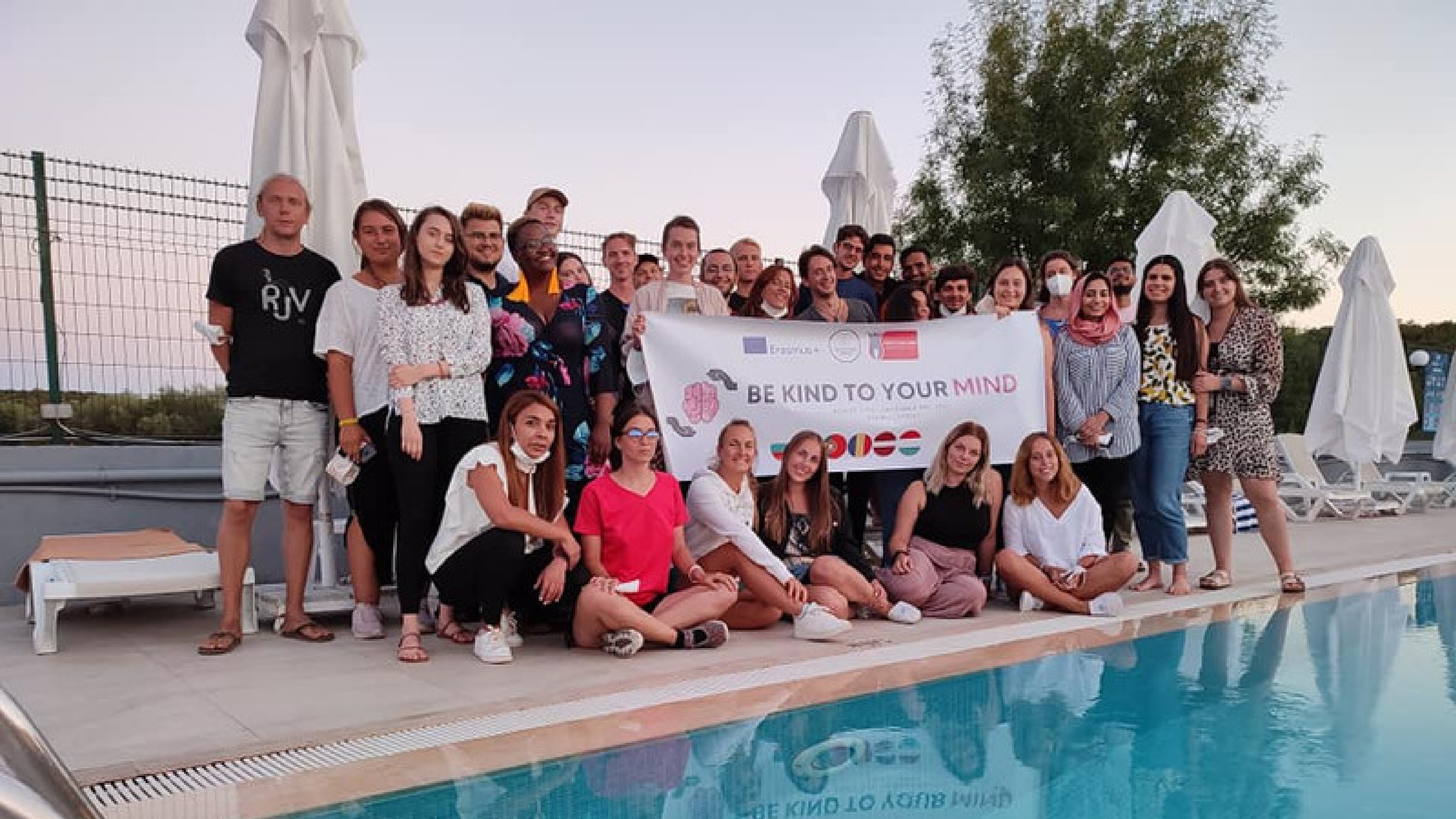
**e. Erasmus+ for Young Entrepreneurs:**

<https://www.erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu/>

- **More about Youthpass**

<https://www.youthpass.eu/en/about-youthpass/about/>











*Thank you all*

FOR MAKING THIS A GREAT PROJECT!