Report from research phase on digital and AI tools for mental health support

Proposed applications for testing and team assignments

During the preparatory phase of the research, all participating teams carried out a systematic review of digital applications designed to support mental health, self-awareness, and emotional regulation. The process aimed to identify diverse tools covering the main categories of digital mental health support based on insights from surveys on youth:

- **Mindfulness and CBT-based self-help**,
- **Mood and habit tracking**,
- **Recommendation and self-care systems**
- **Digital peer support platforms**.

The selection was guided by two main criteria: (1) evidence-based content and professional credibility, and (2) usability and accessibility for youth and youth workers. The process also considered linguistic availability, data privacy standards (GDPR compliance), and potential for integration into non-formal education settings.

To ensure a balanced evaluation, four trainers from partner organizations were assigned sets of applications representing different categories and platforms (mobile and web-based). This approach guaranteed equal exposure to various digital modalities while preventing overlap in the peer support category, which tends to generate more subjective experiences.

As agreed at the meeting, the application distribution was carried out as follows:

Organisation	Assigned application	Focus areas
Studio B	Wisdo, Take My Hand, Wysa, MindDoc, LifeUp	CBT-based therapy, AI self-help, mindfulness, gamified self-care
Novotarium	CBT Companion, What's Up?, 7 Cups, Youper, MyCompass	Cognitive restructuring, AI insights, anonymous peer support
YBB	Daylio, Sanvello, This Way Up, Insight Timer, How We Feel	Mood tracking, meditation, emotional literacy, group support
EMA	Mindless Labs, Reflectly, MoodFit, eMoods,Tangerine	Mood analytics, chatbot-based reflection, community well-being

This distribution model ensured that:

- Each organization covered at least one app from each main category;
- All partners tested a mix of evidence-based and community-driven tools;
- The overall dataset reflected different technological, cultural, and linguistic contexts.

Each trainer was asked to test applications in depth and provide comparative reflections on accessibility, functionality, emotional tone, and integration potential in youth work environments.

Evaluation criteria and assessment structure

Before the testing phase began, the consortium jointly developed a comprehensive evaluation framework to ensure consistency and objectivity in assessing all selected digital mental health applications.

The framework was designed collaboratively by trainers and researchers from partner organizations and documented in the Mental Health Apps Tracking Sheet. It outlined quantitative and qualitative indicators for evaluating each app's usability, scientific value, accessibility, and potential integration into youth work.

The framework emphasized critical digital literacy, encouraging trainers not only to assess technical performance but also to reflect on ethical, psychological, and pedagogical implications. Each tested application was analyzed using a multi-criteria structure divided into eight main dimensions, ensuring a 360° view of the app's quality and relevance.

Criteria	Description and Expected Assessment Focus
1. Ease of Use	Evaluation of navigation clarity, onboarding process, visual design, and general intuitiveness (all rated 1–5). Trainers were asked to note if the interface supports independent use by youth without prior guidance.
2. Content Quality	Assessment of thematic relevance, accuracy, engagement level, and cultural adaptability. Trainers examined whether the content aligns with mental health education objectives and avoids pseudoscientific or stigmatizing elements.
3. Scientific Evidence	Verification of the app's scientific or clinical grounding — presence of institutional partnerships, peer-reviewed research, certifications. Apps without evidence were not automatically excluded but were marked as "awareness tools".
4. Accessibility and Inclusion	Analysis of language options, offline functionality, accessibility for people with disabilities (screen readers, contrast, text options), and cultural or linguistic inclusiveness.
5. Functional Analysis	Listing of all tested features (tracking, journaling, meditation, chatbot, peer support, etc.), including comments on usability, performance stability, and coherence of core functions.
6. Price and Value for Money	Comparison of free and premium versions, transparency of payment model, and affordability for the project's target groups (young people, youth workers, small organizations).
7. Compliance and Privacy	Review of GDPR compliance, transparency of data policies, registration requirements, and ethical handling of personal data. Trainers were instructed to pay special attention to whether the app requests unnecessary access permissions or personal identifiers.
8. Integration Potential	Evaluation of the app's potential use in non-formal education, training, or peer-support contexts. Trainers rated this as high, medium, or low and provided examples of how the app could be integrated into workshops, mentoring, or reflection sessions.

Alongside these main criteria, the framework required narrative reflections and supporting documentation to ensure deeper qualitative insights.

Each trainer was asked to include:

1. **Technical observations** – notes about bugs, crashes, compatibility issues, or missing features.
2. **Strengths and weaknesses summary** – concise overview of positive aspects and limitations.
3. **Personal reflections** – subjective impressions on emotional impact, motivation to continue using the app, and perceived user experience.
4. **Screenshots or recordings** (optional) – visual documentation of the app's interface and key functionalities.
5. **Final recommendation** – clear answer (Yes/No/Maybe) regarding whether the app should be considered for further use within the HEARTS project.

All partner teams followed a standardized reporting template, ensuring comparability across organizations. Each entry included:

- **Basic metadata:** app name, category, OS/platform, link, testing dates, and version.
- **Quantitative ratings:** 1–5 scale per relevant category.
- **Qualitative commentary:** open-ended reflections for each section.
- **Summary fields:** overall usability score and integration rating.

Trainers were encouraged to engage with the apps both personally and professionally, as individual users and as educators, to provide a realistic understanding of how digital self-help tools can function in real youth work settings.

Special attention was paid to ensuring that:

- The testing process did not substitute or simulate therapy, but explored educational usability.
- Trainers approached all tools critically, identifying potential risks such as over-monitoring, pseudoscientific claims, or intrusive data collection.
- Reflections included the emotional impact of using the apps, fostering awareness of how digital tools influence mood, focus, and attention span.

This multidimensional approach helped balance technological optimism with pedagogical caution, laying the foundation for the project's next phase: selection of tools suitable for training with youth workers.

Implementation steps

The app testing process followed a standardized five-step structure, ensuring comparability across teams.

Selection and familiarization – Each trainer selected the assigned apps based on the central distribution table. Before testing, they reviewed the app description, privacy policy, and pricing model. Trainers also verified compatibility with their device (Android/iOS/Web).

Daily usage and reflection – Trainers were asked to interact with the apps at least once per day, exploring all available features such as journaling, check-ins, meditation, AI chat, or group discussion. After each session, they recorded short reflective notes covering usability, emotional effect, and educational potential.

Technical and functional verification – All functional elements were tested systematically - login process, tracking tools, notifications, community access, offline availability, and data export options. Any technical irregularities (crashes, bugs, or login failures) were documented in the tracking sheet.

Evaluation form completion – After the testing period, each trainer filled out the standardized evaluation form containing:

- Quantitative ratings (1–5) for each of the eight criteria;
- Qualitative comments summarizing personal impressions and observed strengths or weaknesses;
- A recommendation on whether the app should be considered for further use in the project's next phase.

Team discussion and cross-comparison – Partner teams held internal reflection meeting to compare experiences and align interpretations. Session provided deeper insights into:

- How trainers personally experienced the tools;
- How young users might engage differently;
- Which apps showed potential for structured implementation in non-formal learning settings.

Throughout the testing, all trainers adhered to ethical principles and data protection standards:

- Personal well-being first: testers were reminded not to engage with content perceived as emotionally triggering.
- GDPR compliance: no personal or sensitive data were shared externally; apps were evaluated using pseudonymous accounts when possible.
- Transparency: all results were recorded objectively in the shared evaluation sheet, without promotional bias toward specific tools.

Detailed results and analysis by organization

Youth Bridges Budapest

As part of the *HEARTS* project research and testing phase, YBB explored digital applications from their list. These tools were selected to represent different functional categories within the broader landscape of digital mental health.

After detailed testing and evaluation, 3 applications met predefined criteria:

- **Daylio** – a mood tracking and journaling app,
- **Insight Timer** – a meditation and mindfulness app, and
- **How We Feel** – an emotional awareness and education tool based on Yale University's RULER framework.

Testing was led by trainer Csenge Kolozsvari, who carried out a structured evaluation following the consortium's unified methodology. Each app was analyzed through eight predefined criteria: ease of use, content quality, scientific grounding, accessibility, functional performance, pricing, privacy, and integration potential. The evaluaton was conducted in period August-September 2025.

App 1: Daylio – Mood Tracker and Micro-Journal

Category: Mood and habit tracking
Platforms: Android / iOS
Developer: Habitics

Summary of findings

Criteria	Key Observations
Ease of Use	Rated 5/5 for navigation and 5/5 for design. Interface is friendly, visual, and customisable (emojis, colours, icons). Onboarding simple, though "skip premium" option is somewhat hidden (4/5).
Content Quality	Encourages users to record mood using a 5-point scale and link emotions with activities (sleep, health, hobbies, work, social). Reminders and calendar visuals motivate daily reflection.
Scientific Evidence	Moderate — supported by usability/self-reflection studies; not validated for clinical therapy. Recognised as a preventive, awareness-raising tool.
Accessibility	Available in 30+ languages; works offline; screen-reader friendly. User data minimised; nickname login only.
Price	Free version sufficient; Premium affordable (€2.5/month or €8.9/year).
Compliance & Privacy	GDPR-aligned; clear privacy policy; data minimisation by default.
Integration Potential	High — applicable for journaling, awareness exercises, and personal reflection in workshops or mentoring.

Strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:
- Appealing visual design suitable for youth.
- Simple mood journaling encourages self-awareness.
- Offline access and privacy by default.

Weaknesses:
- Requires consistent motivation for long-term engagement.
- Frequent exposure to "negative moods" may intensify self-focus if unmoderated.

Overall Rating: 5 (High usability, strong relevance for youth awareness activities)

App 2: Insight Timer – Meditation and Mindfulness

Category: Guided meditation and relaxation
Platforms: Android / iOS / Web
Developer: Insight Network

Summary of findings

Criteria	Key Observations
Ease of Use	Highly intuitive, rated 5/5 for navigation and 4/5 for design. Calm visuals and immediate access to meditation. No registration required to begin.

Criteria	Key Observations
Content Quality	Guided meditations, soundscapes, sleep tracks, and mindfulness challenges. Timer customisation and post-session journaling. Some pseudoscientific "manifestation" content noted.
Scientific Evidence	Supported by large-scale observational data and user studies; few formal clinical trials. Evidence suggests improved emotional resilience with regular use.
Accessibility	English only. Works offline for downloaded content; internet needed for community features. Well adapted for visually impaired users.
Price	Functional free version. Premium ~€70/year; expensive for youth audiences.
Compliance & Privacy	Transparent policy; no registration required to start; content should be curated in educational settings.
Integration Potential	Medium–High — suitable for relaxation sessions or to model mindfulness exercises during trainings.

Strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

- Very accessible and flexible.
- Deep library of content adaptable to different user goals.
- Pleasant and calming user experience.

Weaknesses:

- Pseudoscientific content undermines credibility in educational contexts.
- Exclusively in English.

Overall Rating: 4 (Strong pedagogical potential when curated for evidence-based content)

App 3: How We Feel – Emotion Awareness and Check-In

Category: Emotional intelligence and reflection
Platforms: Android / iOS / Web
Developer: How We Feel Project

Summary of findings

Criteria	Key Observations
Ease of Use	User-friendly (navigation 5/5, design 4/5). Visual and responsive; moving animations may distract some neurodivergent users.
Content Quality	Built around Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence's RULER framework. "Check-In" enables fast emotional labelling via the Mood Meter model. Extra tools (videos, gratitude, breathing) less structured and sometimes confusing.
Scientific Evidence	Evidence-informed: developed with Yale CEI; supported by large datasets from millions of check-ins (no RCTs).
Accessibility	English only; highly adjustable (animations, colours, fonts). GDPR compliant; no registration required.
Price	Free; optional donations and research participation.

Criteria	Key Observations
Compliance & Privacy	GDPR-aligned; clear user controls; data shared only with explicit opt-in for research.
Integration Potential	Medium — "Check-In" works well to open/close workshops; limited group-use functionality otherwise.

Strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

- Grounded in educational science and emotional literacy.
- Free and inclusive.
- Excellent visual representation of emotional states.

Weaknesses:

- Tools are time-consuming.
- Overemphasis on gratitude and positivity may alienate disadvantaged youth.

Overall Rating: 3 (Strong educational value; limited for group facilitation)

Cross-App insights (YBB)

The YBB evaluation identified several key findings relevant to youth work and digital well-being:

Aspect	Findings and Interpretation
Usability	All three apps received strong usability scores; Daylio and How We Feel stood out for intuitive design and minimal onboarding barriers.
Scientific Credibility	Only How We Feel demonstrated a clear institutional foundation (Yale CEI). Daylio and Insight Timer rely on user engagement research rather than clinical trials.
Engagement	Visuals, reminders, and data tracking sustain user motivation. However, long-term use requires self-discipline or external prompts.
Cultural Fit	Daylio's multilingual interface makes it inclusive, whereas the English-only limitation of the other two apps restricts accessibility.
Pedagogical Use	Trainers found multiple entry points for integration: Daylio for daily reflections, How We Feel for emotional literacy workshops, and Insight Timer for relaxation or focus activities.

General conclusions from YBB testing

The Hungarian team concluded that digital mental health tools can significantly enrich non-formal education when used ethically and critically. Rather than serving as therapeutic instruments, these apps act as pedagogical catalysts — helping young people:

- Name and understand emotions,
- Reflect on their habits and triggers, and
- Engage in small, consistent acts of self-care.

YBB emphasized that the most promising approach is hybrid integration — combining app-based self-reflection with guided group discussions or creative activities.

YBB's recommendation:
Include Daylio and How We Feel in the shortlist for the training; use Insight Timer selectively for meditation or educator well-being sessions.

Novotarium

The Novotarium team approached the testing phase with a focus on exploring applications that integrate artificial intelligence, peer-to-peer communication, and CBT-based digital programs. The aim was to identify tools that could realistically support self-reflection, emotional regulation, and learning-by-doing within youth work contexts. Trainer Miloš Jeremić tested applications from his list and three were selected for further consideration, as they met the predefined criteria:

- **7 Cups** – anonymous peer support,
- ***What's Up?*** – CBT-based mood tracker, and
- **myCompass** – self-guided CBT web platform.

Testing was conducted during August–September 2025, following the shared HEARTS evaluation framework.

App 1: 7 Cups – Anonymous Peer Support

Category: Online peer support and emotional sharing
Platform: Android / iOS / Web
Developer: 7 Cups of Tea

Summary of Findings

Criterion	Key Observations
Ease of Use	Rated 4/5. Interface intuitive; users can join immediately and select topics of concern.
Content Quality	Rated 4/5. Peer support content diverse, though quality varies depending on volunteer listener experience. Encourages empathetic communication.
Scientific Evidence	Not formally clinical but recognized for promoting social connection and emotional expression.
Accessibility	Available globally; accessible via Android. Interface clear but entirely in English.
Price	Free for peer support; optional paid professional therapy sessions.
Privacy	Transparent policy; strong anonymity protection.
Integration Potential	Presentation only – Suitable for demonstrating online support principles, but not recommended for direct youth use without supervision.

Strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:
- Safe community environment;
- Encourages listening and empathy;
- No registration barriers.

Weaknesses:

- Varying listener competence;
- Requires moderation for young users.

Overall Rating: 3 (Moderate relevance; limited pedagogical integration)

App 2: What's Up? – CBT-Based Mood Tracker

Category: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Self-Help
Platform: Android / iOS
Developer: Jackson Tempest

Summary of findings

Criterion	Key Observations
Ease of Use	Rated 4/5. Simple navigation with clear icons; daily check-ins and quick access to exercises.
Content Quality	Rated 4/5. Combines CBT and ACT techniques with thought diaries, grounding, and coping strategies. Offers supportive affirmations and educational content.
Scientific Evidence	Based on established CBT and ACT frameworks; not a certified medical tool but grounded in recognized therapeutic principles.
Accessibility	Works offline; English only; text-heavy but well-organized. Suitable for independent use.
Price	Free with optional in-app purchases.
Privacy	No personal data required; privacy policy transparent and GDPR-compliant.
Integration Potential	Medium. Useful for individual reflection, learning CBT concepts, and emotional awareness activities.

Strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

- Evidence-based approach;
- Practical exercises;
- No registration required.

Weaknesses:

- Text-heavy;
- Not visually engaging;
- Limited group interaction features.

Overall Rating: 4 (Scientifically grounded, suitable for self-guided emotional awareness)

App 3: myCompass – Self-Guided CBT Program

Category: Online CBT and self-assessment
Platform: Web
Developer: Black Dog Institute (Australia)

Summary of findings

Criterion	Key Observations
Ease of Use	Rated 3/5. Simple but outdated design; onboarding requires several steps and reading comprehension.
Content Quality	Rated 5/5. Modules based on CBT, stress management, and behavioral activation. Offers self-assessment and personalized tracking.
Scientific Evidence	Strong – backed by randomized controlled trials and university-led research.
Accessibility	Fully web-based, free of charge, accessible via any device. English only.
Price	Completely free. High value for educational contexts.
Privacy	Transparent privacy policy and terms of use.
Integration Potential	Medium – suitable for self-guided learning or as an example of structured mental health e-learning. Not interactive enough for youth groups.

Strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

- Clinically validated;
- Clear structure; free;
- Suitable for adult learners and trainers.

Weaknesses:

- English-only;
- Static interface;
- Requires self-discipline to complete modules.

Overall Rating: 4 (High educational relevance, especially for trainer-level use)

Cross-App insights (Novotarium)

Dimension	Findings
Usability	All three apps were generally intuitive and functional. What's Up? and 7 Cups stood out for accessibility and user-friendly design, while myCompass required more structured navigation and self-discipline due to its web-based format.
Scientific Foundation	myCompass showed the highest level of scientific and clinical evidence, supported by research and randomized controlled trials. What's Up? relied on established CBT and ACT methods, while 7 Cups emphasized social connection and emotional sharing rather than formal therapeutic content.
Accessibility	All apps functioned reliably across platforms, though the English-only interfaces limited accessibility for non-English-speaking youth. Offline functionality of What's Up? added flexibility, while myCompass required stable internet access.
Pedagogical Potential	The apps were assessed as more suitable for demonstration and individual reflection than for direct use with younger audiences. They are valuable tools for introducing topics such as emotional literacy, digital empathy, and CBT-based reflection techniques in youth worker training or mentoring programs.

Dimension	Findings
Overall Insight	The testing confirmed that apps integrating CBT principles and peer support can effectively promote emotional awareness when used under guidance. Combining practical reflection (What's Up?), structured learning (myCompass), and community empathy (7 Cups) created a complementary digital learning experience.

General conclusions from Novotarium testing

The Novotarium team concluded that evidence-based and CBT-oriented digital tools can meaningfully support emotional learning and self-reflection, especially when combined with professional facilitation. Each app contributed differently to the overall understanding of digital mental health:

- 7 Cups demonstrated the value of safe, anonymous sharing environments,
- What's Up? provided accessible and practical CBT-based exercises, and
- myCompass served as a model of structured, scientifically validated online learning.

Novotarium emphasized that such applications are most effective when used within guided, reflective, and ethical contexts, rather than as standalone solutions, and reaffirmed that emotional technologies should act as tools for awareness and discussion, not replacements for professional or interpersonal support.

Novotarium's recommendation:
Include myCompass, What's Up?, and 7 Cups in the shortlist for training within educational and awareness-based workshops, focusing on their complementary roles in reflection, learning, and digital empathy.

STUDIO B

The Studio B team from Croatia evaluated several digital applications addressing various aspects of mental health support, reflection, and peer connection. After a detailed testing process based on predefined criteria, 3 applications were selected for further use and integration in youth worker training, as they demonstrated high levels of accessibility, emotional safety, and educational potential:

- **Wisdo** – peer support network,
- **Wysa** – an AI chatbot for emotional support, and
- **Take My Hand** – crisis support chat.

Testing was conducted by trainer Nina Jureković between 18 August and 15 September 2025, using the shared HEARTS evaluation framework. The main goal was to examine the user experience, content quality, scientific reliability, accessibility, and educational applicability of the selected apps in youth work.

App 1: Wisdo – Peer Support Network

Category: Online peer support and shared storytelling
Platform: Android / iOS
Developer: Wisdo Ltd.

Summary of findings

Criterion	Key Observations
Ease of Use	Rated 5/5. Simple onboarding and navigation; users can easily join themed support communities and start conversations.
Content Quality	Rated 4/5. Focused on shared experiences and peer connection. Topics include stress, anxiety, relationships, and self-esteem. Content quality varies with community engagement but overall supportive and safe.
Scientific Evidence	Limited clinical validation, but built on positive psychology and peer-support models promoting emotional well-being and connectedness.
Accessibility	Available globally in English; intuitive visual interface; requires internet connection for community interaction.
Price	Free access to peer-support communities; optional premium version for mentoring and live sessions.
Compliance & Privacy	Clear privacy policy; moderated spaces; GDPR-aligned.
Integration Potential	Medium–High. Effective for group discussions on empathy, digital connection, and emotional support networks in youth work.

Strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

- Safe and inclusive community spaces;
- Promotes empathy and shared learning;
- Minimal barriers to access

Weaknesses:

- Dependent on user engagement and moderation quality;
- Limited scientific oversight.

Overall Rating: 4 (Supportive and inclusive; strong potential for peer-connection workshops)

App 2: Wysa – AI Chatbot for Mental Health

Category: Digital AI-based emotional assistant
Platform: Android / iOS / Web
Developer: Touchkin eServices Pvt. Ltd.

Summary of findings

Criterion	Key Observations
Ease of Use	5/5. Very intuitive and welcoming design. Quick orientation; chatbot interface promotes engagement.
Content Quality	4/5. AI chatbot integrates CBT, mindfulness, and motivational exercises. Scientifically grounded, empathetic tone.
Scientific Evidence	Strong. ORCHA-certified (92% overall, 100% clinical assurance); part of NHS Talking Therapies; backed by 45+ peer-reviewed studies.
Accessibility	Well-adapted for different user groups; supports text and voice input. English only.

Criterion	Key Observations
Price	Free basic version; paid premium access for human coaching and advanced tools.
Compliance & Privacy	Verified clinical assurance via ORCHA; GDPR-compliant data handling.
Integration Potential	Medium–High. Effective as a demonstrative tool for workshops on emotional literacy and digital well-being.

Strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

- Empathetic AI communication;
- Clinically validated;
- Promotes emotional literacy and digital empathy.

Weaknesses:

- English-only;
- Paid premium content may limit long-term use.

Overall Rating: 5 (Highly valuable for educational and reflective use)

App 3: Take My Hand – Crisis Support Chat

Category: Crisis intervention and emotional support
Platform: iOS / Web
Developer: Take My Hand Project (Ireland)

Summary of findings

Criterion	Key Observations
Ease of Use	Rated 4/5. Straightforward and accessible interface; users can start chatting with a trained volunteer in just one click. Simple design focused on comfort and immediacy.
Content Quality	Rated 4/5. Offers real-time emotional support through trained listeners for people in distress. Conversations emphasize empathy, listening, and safety rather than therapy.
Scientific Evidence	Not clinically certified but follows recognized crisis-intervention and active-listening models used in helpline support services.
Accessibility	Web-based platform available 24/7; supports English language; accessible on both computers and mobile browsers. Available for iOS but not for Android. No registration required.
Price	Entirely free; volunteer-based support model.
Compliance & Privacy	Professional moderation; anonymity by default; GDPR-aligned.
Integration Potential	Medium–High. Valuable for demonstrating principles of emotional first aid and online peer support in youth worker training.

Strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

- Immediate access to help and human connection;
- Professional moderation ensures safety;
- No account or app installation required.

Weaknesses:

- Limited to real-time chat format;
- Not suitable for long-term engagement or group learning.

Overall Rating: 4 (Reliable and empathetic; strong model for crisis-response education)

Cross-App Insights (Studio B)

Dimension	Findings and Interpretation
User Experience	All three apps were easy to navigate and offered smooth user experiences. Wysa stood out as the most engaging and interactive tool due to its AI-based conversational interface, while Wisdo and Take My Hand provided simple and emotionally safe communication platforms.
Scientific Foundation	Wysa demonstrated strong scientific and clinical validation through NHS endorsement and ORCHA certification. Wisdo and Take My Hand are not clinically certified but are built on peer-support and crisis-intervention models grounded in evidence-based mental health practices.
Educational Value	Wysa proved ideal for workshops on digital empathy and emotional expression; Wisdo effectively supports learning about peer networks and emotional connection; Take My Hand serves as a model for teaching emotional first aid and responsible online crisis communication.
Ethical and Privacy Standards	All three apps uphold transparent privacy policies and comply with GDPR regulations. Take My Hand and Wysa particularly emphasize user anonymity and safety through professional moderation and secure communication channels.
Youth Suitability	Wysa is highly relatable for young users due to its conversational design and empathetic tone. Wisdo appeals to users seeking social connection and shared experiences, while Take My Hand is best suited for demonstrating real-time support systems rather than continuous use by youth groups.

General conclusions from Studio B testing

The Studio B team concluded that AI-supported and peer-based digital tools can meaningfully enhance emotional awareness, empathy, and connection among young people when used in guided educational settings. The tested applications complement each other, illustrating different dimensions of mental health education:

- Wysa fosters self-reflection and emotional regulation through AI-driven conversation,
- Wisdo promotes peer support and shared learning in a safe digital community, and
- Take My Hand exemplifies immediate emotional support and crisis response models.

The testing reaffirmed that these tools are most effective when integrated into structured, human-facilitated learning environments, helping youth workers demonstrate both digital empathy and emotional safety online. Rather than replacing professional help, they function as educational aids that build understanding, compassion, and resilience.

Studio B recommendation:
Prioritize Wysa, Wisdo, and Take My Hand for pilot implementation in youth worker training and local workshops. Together, they provide a comprehensive digital toolkit for teaching empathy, crisis response, and emotional literacy in youth work contexts.

EMA

The EMA team from Belgium participated in the HEARTS project's collective testing process, focusing on evaluating applications that support emotional awareness, daily reflection, and data-driven self-regulation. Their selected tools were chosen to represent three distinct approaches to digital mental health:

- **Moodfit** – self-help reflection
- **eMoods** – clinical tracking,
- **Reflectly** – AI journaling app

Testing was conducted in August - September 2025 by trainer Georgiana Darau. All evaluations followed the same unified framework based on eight shared criteria.

App 1: Moodfit – Mental Health Fitness

Category: Mood tracking and self-care
Platform: Android / iOS
Developer: Roble Ridge Software LLC
Summary of findings

Criterion	Key Observations
Ease of Use	Rated 4/5. Highly intuitive and easy to navigate; users can quickly log moods and view clear progress dashboards.
Content Quality	Rated 3/5. Combines evidence-based features such as CBT-inspired reflections, breathing exercises, and gratitude tracking with personalized analytics linking habits and emotions.
Scientific Evidence	Not clinically certified, but based on recognized CBT and behavioral-activation principles. Provides evidence-informed guidance for emotional awareness and habit change.
Accessibility	Works offline; suitable for users with basic digital literacy. Interface clean and supportive.
Price & Value	Free version includes all essential features; premium subscription unlocks advanced analytics. Considered good value for individual users.
Compliance & Privacy	Transparent privacy policy and GDPR-aligned data handling. No sensitive data risks observed.
Integration Potential	Medium. Useful for individual reflection, journaling, and emotional awareness exercises during workshops.

Strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:
- Simple and motivating interface;
- Evidence-informed structure;
- Suitable for daily self-reflection.

Weaknesses:

- Limited interactive or social features;
- Emotional depth depends on user engagement.

Overall Rating: 4 (Well-balanced and motivational; strong for self-reflection activities)

App 2: eMoods – Mood Tracker

Category: Mood and symptom tracking
Platform: Android/iOS
Developer: Yottaram LLC

Summary of findings

Criterion	Key Observations
Ease of Use	Rated 4/5. Simple and structured layout; daily logging process easy to maintain and suitable for consistent tracking.
Content Quality	Rated 3/5. Focused mainly on symptom tracking — mood, sleep, medication, and energy — with exportable graphs and reports. Lacks interactive or educational features.
Scientific Evidence	Developed for clinical and research contexts; aligns with data-driven self-monitoring principles commonly used in behavioral health studies.
Accessibility	Works offline; minimalistic interface accessible to users of all literacy levels.
Functional Analysis	Daily check-ins, printable summaries, long-term chart comparisons, and customizable tracking categories.
Price & Value	Free core features; optional premium version for cloud sync and data export. Considered affordable and practical.
Compliance & Privacy	Transparent privacy policy; appropriate for sensitive data and personal journaling.
Integration Potential	Medium. Valuable as a demonstration tool for data awareness and self-monitoring exercises, though less engaging for group use.

Strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

- Reliable and structured data tracking;
- Clinically inspired framework;
- Supports reflective learning about emotional patterns.

Weaknesses:

- Limited interactivity and visual appeal;
- Less emotionally engaging for younger users.

Overall Rating: 3 (Strong for data-awareness training; limited engagement for group use)

App 3: Reflectly – AI Journaling App

Category: Digital journaling and emotional reflection
Platform: Android / iOS
Developer: Reflectly ApS

Summary of findings

Criterion	Key Observations
Ease of Use	Rated 5/5. Visually appealing and highly intuitive interface; daily prompts guide users smoothly through journaling reflections.
Content Quality	Rated 4/5. AI-generated prompts encourage emotional awareness, gratitude, and mindfulness. Focuses on positive psychology and self-reflection.
Scientific Evidence	Based on principles of positive psychology and self-reflective journaling; not clinically certified but promotes emotional regulation and resilience.
Accessibility	Available for both Android and iOS; requires stable internet connection for data sync. English only.
Functional Analysis	Daily mood entries, guided journaling prompts, statistics on emotional trends, and motivational quotes.
Price & Value	Free basic version; premium subscription unlocks advanced insights and custom prompts. Good value for regular users.
Compliance & Privacy	GDPR-compliant; users' data stored securely with clear privacy policy.
Integration Potential	Medium–High. Ideal for journaling workshops, reflective activities, and exercises promoting emotional literacy in youth work.

Strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:
- Engaging visual design and user-friendly interface;
- Promotes daily reflection and positive thinking;
- AI prompts enhance motivation and emotional insight.

Weaknesses:
- English-only;
- Some premium content behind paywall;
- Limited interpersonal or group interaction features.

Overall Rating: 4 (Visually engaging and emotionally supportive; strong tool for individual reflection)

Cross-App Insights (EMA)

Dimension	Findings and Interpretation
Usability	All three applications were intuitive and easy to navigate. Reflectly offered the most engaging and visually appealing interface, while Moodfit and eMoods provided more structured layouts that supported consistent daily use.
Scientific	eMoods demonstrated the highest level of scientific credibility, having been designed for

Dimension	Findings and Interpretation
Foundation	research and clinical self-monitoring. Moodfit followed CBT and behavioral activation principles, while Reflectly incorporated positive psychology and self-reflective journaling methods to enhance emotional awareness.
Engagement and Motivation	Reflectly achieved the highest emotional engagement through daily AI-driven prompts and personalized reflection exercises. Moodfit maintained user motivation with progress tracking and visual feedback, while eMoods required more user discipline to sustain regular input.
Accessibility and Inclusiveness	All three apps were accessible and affordable. However, the lack of multilingual options limits inclusiveness for some youth participants.
Educational and Pedagogical Value	Moodfit was identified as the most suitable for guided self-reflection and journaling sessions. eMoods served as a strong example of structured, data-driven self-observation, and Reflectly proved valuable for fostering emotional expression and positive reflection during youth workshops.

General conclusions from EMA testing

The EMA team concluded that structured and reflective digital tools can effectively enhance emotional literacy, mindfulness, and self-awareness among youth and youth workers when used within guided educational settings. Each of the tested applications brought a distinct pedagogical value:

- Moodfit supported self-reflection and behavior awareness through visual data and habit tracking,
- eMoods provided an example of structured, clinical-style self-monitoring, and
- Reflectly encouraged daily journaling, gratitude, and positive emotional expression through AI-supported reflection prompts.

Collectively, these apps demonstrated that digital tools can complement non-formal learning by helping users observe emotional patterns, practice reflection, and build self-regulation skills. Trainers noted that such apps are most effective when introduced as guided exercises, accompanied by group discussion and emotional processing rather than used independently.

EMA recommendation

The EMA team identified these tools suited for different educational purposes: Moodfit was the primary recommendation, valued for its effectiveness in promoting emotional awareness, journaling, and reflection. eMoods was endorsed as a reliable resource for self-monitoring and for demonstrating data-driven reflection in educational settings. Reflectly was highlighted for its strong potential in fostering emotional literacy and supporting creative journaling workshops.

Comparative conclusions and next steps

Cross-organizational summary

The testing phase successfully engaged four international partner teams across the HEARTS consortium, each contributing unique expertise and perspectives:

Partner	Country	Main Focus in Testing	Apps Recommended	Key Findings
Youth Bridges	Hungary	Mindfulness and	Daylio, Insight	Emphasized usability, visual design, and reflective

Partner	Country	Main Focus in Testing	Apps Recommended	Key Findings
Budapest (YBB)		emotion tracking	Timer, How We Feel	potential. Daylio and How We Feel recommended for group use; Insight Timer to be used selectively for mindfulness and educator well-being.
Novotarium	Serbia	CBT-based self-help and peer support	7 Cups, What's Up?, myCompass	Highlighted evidence-based and CBT/ACT-inspired learning tools plus anonymous peer support. myCompass and What's Up? recommended for educational use; 7 Cups for demonstration of peer-support principles.
Studio B	Croatia	Digital empathy and crisis response	Wisdo, Wysa, Take My Hand	Validated AI chatbots and moderated peer/crisis-support tools. Wysa, Wisdo, and Take My Hand selected for training and pilot activities.
EMA	Belgium	Self-monitoring and journaling	Moodfit, eMoods, Reflectly	Focused on self-reflection, structured tracking, and emotional literacy. Moodfit, eMoods, and Reflectly approved for integration in pilot trainings.

This collective effort created a robust empirical base for selecting the most appropriate tools for HEARTS training implementation.

Comparative analysis

1. Usability and user engagement

All organizations rated ease of use and accessibility as key success factors. Apps such as Daylio, Moodfit, Reflectly, and Wysa stood out for intuitive design, appealing visuals, and low entry barriers—critical to sustaining daily engagement. By contrast, clinically oriented tools like myCompass and eMoods were rich in functionality but required stronger motivation and facilitator guidance to maintain use.

2. Scientific and ethical integrity

Partners prioritised tools with credible psychological frameworks and transparent data policies. Wysa (NHS-endorsed, ORCHA-certified), myCompass (Black Dog Institute), and How We Feel (Yale CEI) offered the strongest scientific grounding. Other apps such as What's Up?, Moodfit, and eMoods also drew upon CBT or behavioural-activation principles. No tool raised GDPR concerns; each team appreciated clear privacy policies and consent mechanisms.

3. Accessibility and inclusion

Most applications were cross-platform and free or low-cost. However, English-only interfaces limited inclusivity. Daylio's multilingual support proved a major advantage for youth work across diverse contexts. Offline capability in What's Up? and eMoods increased accessibility where connectivity is limited, while web-only tools like myCompass required more stable internet access.

4. Educational and pedagogical relevance

Across the consortium, partners viewed these apps as **educational aids**, not therapeutic replacements. When used with facilitation, they can successfully encourage reflection, empathy, and emotional literacy.

- **Mindfulness and CBT-Based Self-Help** - Tools designed to support emotional regulation, mindfulness, or cognitive restructuring through guided exercises and reflection: Insight Timer, Wysa, What's Up?, myCompass.
- **Mood and Habit Tracking -** Applications that promote self-observation, journaling, and awareness of emotional and behavioural patterns: Daylio, Moodfit, Reflectly, eMoods
- **Recommendation and Self-Care Systems -** Apps that encourage self-improvement, relaxation, and personalized emotional-care routines through reminders, insights, or guided practices: How We Feel, Wisdo
- **Digital Peer-Support Platforms -** Platforms fostering connection, empathy, and shared emotional support through moderated or volunteer-based communication: 7 Cups, Take My Hand

5. Limitations and technical barriers

Common challenges identified across all partners:

- **Premium paywalls** restricting full functionality (Wysa, Reflectly, Insight Timer).
- **Language barriers**, with limited multilingual options.
- **Platform fragmentation** (myCompass web-only, Take My Hand not available for Android).
- **Risk of over-reliance on digital feedback** without interpersonal processing.

6. Synthesis: Top Recommended Applications

Based on the consolidated results, the following applications are recommended for use during the HEARTS training and pilot implementation phase:

App	Primary Function	Why Selected	Proposed Use Case
Wysa	AI-based emotional support	Clinically vetted; engaging; models digital empathy	Workshops on digital mental health and AI literacy
Wisdo	Peer support & shared learning	Safe moderated community; promotes empathy	Group discussions on peer connection and online empathy
Take My Hand	Crisis support chat	Real-time emotional first aid model	Demonstrating crisis-response and digital safety
Moodfit	Self-awareness & habit reflection	Excellent usability; evidence-informed features	Self-tracking and emotional-awareness sessions
Reflectly	AI journaling & reflection	Motivating design; supports gratitude & positivity	Guided journaling and creative reflection practice
myCompass	Online CBT learning	Clinically validated structure; strong pedagogical potential	Self-guided e-learning for trainers and older youth
Daylio	Mood journaling	Visual, accessible, multilingual	Daily reflection and group check-ins
How We Feel	Emotional literacy	Yale CEI foundation; quick check-ins	Opening/closing activities in workshops
eMoods	Symptom tracking & data awareness	Research-based self-monitoring; clear visuals	Demonstrating data-driven reflection and awareness
What's Up?	CBT self-help & coping tools	Combines CBT/ACT strategies; easy to use offline	Personal emotional-regulation exercises
7 Cups	Anonymous peer support	Demonstrates online empathy and listening skills	Education on digital empathy and safe peer communication

These applications collectively meet the core HEARTS criteria: scientific credibility, accessibility, user engagement, pedagogical adaptability, and data ethics. Each partner will draw on a tailored subset during the pilot phase according to workshop objectives.

Lessons learned

1. **Digital empathy can be taught.**
   AI chatbots like Wysa and peer-support apps like Wisdo and 7 Cups showed that emotionally intelligent interaction can be modelled digitally to foster empathy and connection.

2. **Structure enhances reflection.**
   Tools with guided prompts or check-ins such as Daylio, Moodfit, and Reflectly help build consistent self-awareness habits.

3. **Evidence-based design ensures safety.**
   Scientifically grounded apps like myCompass, How We Feel, and What's Up? provided trustworthy frameworks for emotional education.

4. **Human facilitation is irreplaceable.**
   Trainers emphasised that apps should complement, not replace, human connection ensuring that emotional learning remains relational and reflective.

Next steps: from testing to implementation

1. **Training for youth workers**
   Develop training modules introducing responsible and ethical use of digital mental-health tools, focusing on inclusion, emotional competence, and facilitation skills.

2. **Creation of a practical toolkit**
   Produce a guide titled "Digital Tools for Mental Health in Youth Work" containing app overviews, ethical standards, and facilitation templates for reflective workshops.

3. **Local workshops with youth**
   Following the youth-worker training, each partner will conduct workshops using selected tools to explore emotions, stress management, and digital well-being. Reflection sessions will follow each activity to capture participants' experiences and insights.

4. **Evaluation and policy reflection**
   Collect qualitative and quantitative data on app usability, accessibility, and educational impact. Share findings with policymakers to inform national and European discussions on responsible digitalisation in youth mental-health education.

Final reflection

"Across countries and contexts, one insight stood out: technology can support mental health only when it nurtures connection, reflection, and trust. The HEARTS project demonstrates that digital empathy is not just possible — it's teachable."