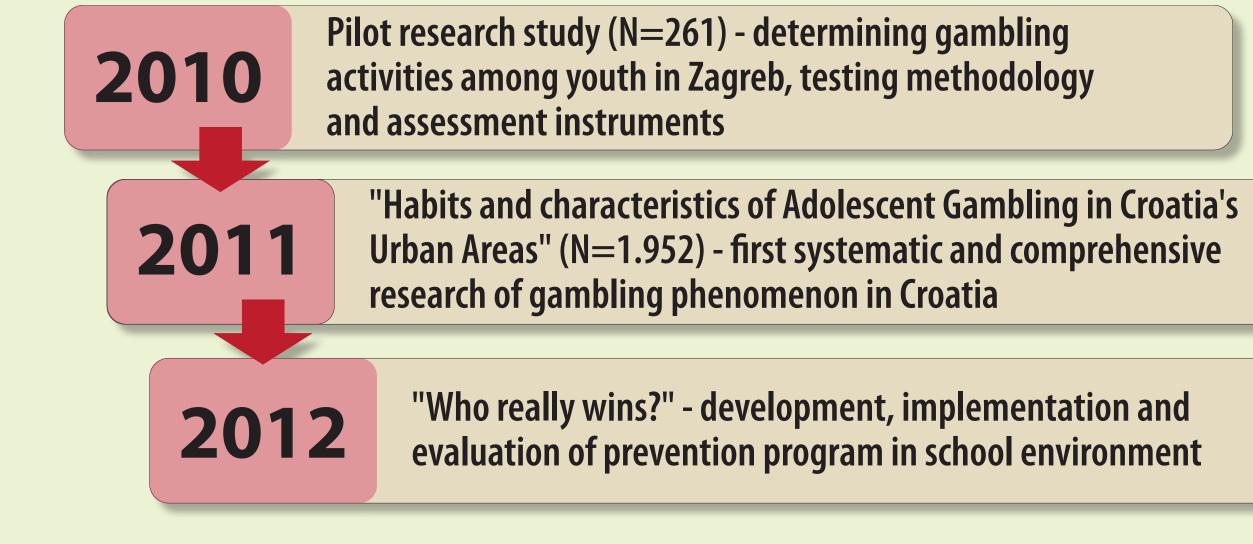


# INTRODUCTION - PROJECT "YOUTH GAMBLING IN CROATIA"

The project "Youth Gambling in Croatia" is the first comprehensive project about adolescent gambling in Croatia. The project started with a pilot research study conducted in March 2010 with the aim of determining gambling activities among youth in Zagreb and testing the methodology and assessment instruments. The central phase of the project was a systematic research study "Habits and characteristics of Adolescent Gambling in Croatia's Urban Areas" (Picture 1). This study was conducted on a probability sample of adolescents, representative for high school students from Croatian urban areas (N=1.952), which allows us generalization of results to this population. The main purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence of gambling, types of gambling activities present among adolescents, their thinking about gambling, prevalence of problem gambling among adolescents, and risk factors associated with it. Further phase of the project is the development and implementation of a prevention program in the school environment which is based on empirical and scientific knowledge obtained by the mentioned study. The project is financially and organizationally supported by Croatian Lottery Ltd., Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences (University of Zagreb), Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, and Teacher Training Agency.

Picture 1. Project "Youth Gambling in Croatia" phases



## **KEY RESULTS**

The term gambling refers to the betting of money and other valuables (referred to as "the stakes") on an event with an uncertain outcome, with the primary aim of winning additional money and/or material goods (Petry, 2001). Despite the fact that minors (below 18 years of age) are legally prohibited from gambling (Law on Games of Chance, 2009), clinical work, as well as media reports, clearly indicate that gambling is an ever-increasing phenomenon among young people in Croatia (Ricijas, Dodig,

# EXPLORING YOUTH GAMBLING IN CROATIA

# GUIDELINES FOR CREATING AN EVIDENCE BASED PREVENTION PROGRAM

Neven Ricijas, Dora Dodig, Valentina Kranzelic, Department of Behavior Disorders aculty of Education Sciences, University of Zagreb; Aleksandra Huic, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb

Picture 5. The profile of adolescent with gambling-related problems

Lower conscientiousness

and lower empathy

Kranzelic and Huic, 2011). Also, the number of places registered for providing different types of games of chance has increased more than five times in Croatia in the last 15 years (mainly sports betting and slot machines). Moreover, studies done outside of Croatia, which we based our study on, indicate that the rate of problem gambling among adolescents ranges from 4 to 8% in comparison with the rate among adult population which ranges from 1 to 3%. Numerous studies have found significant correlations between involvement in gambling activities and higher depression, lower self-esteem, increased anxiety, poor problemsolving skills and cognitive distortions (Gupta and Derevensky, 1998; McDaniel and Zuckerman, 2003). Also, some other problem behaviors (e.g. substance abuse and delinquent behavior) often co-occur with risk and/or problem gambling among young people (Welte et.al., 2009; Petry, 2001).

The results show that gambling activities are highly present among the young population and that adolescents have experience with various gambling activities (Picture 2.).

Picture 2. Gambling activities among Croatian high-school students



83% gambled at least once in their

50% experienced sports betting and scratch cards

30% played lottery, bingo, cards, slot-machines

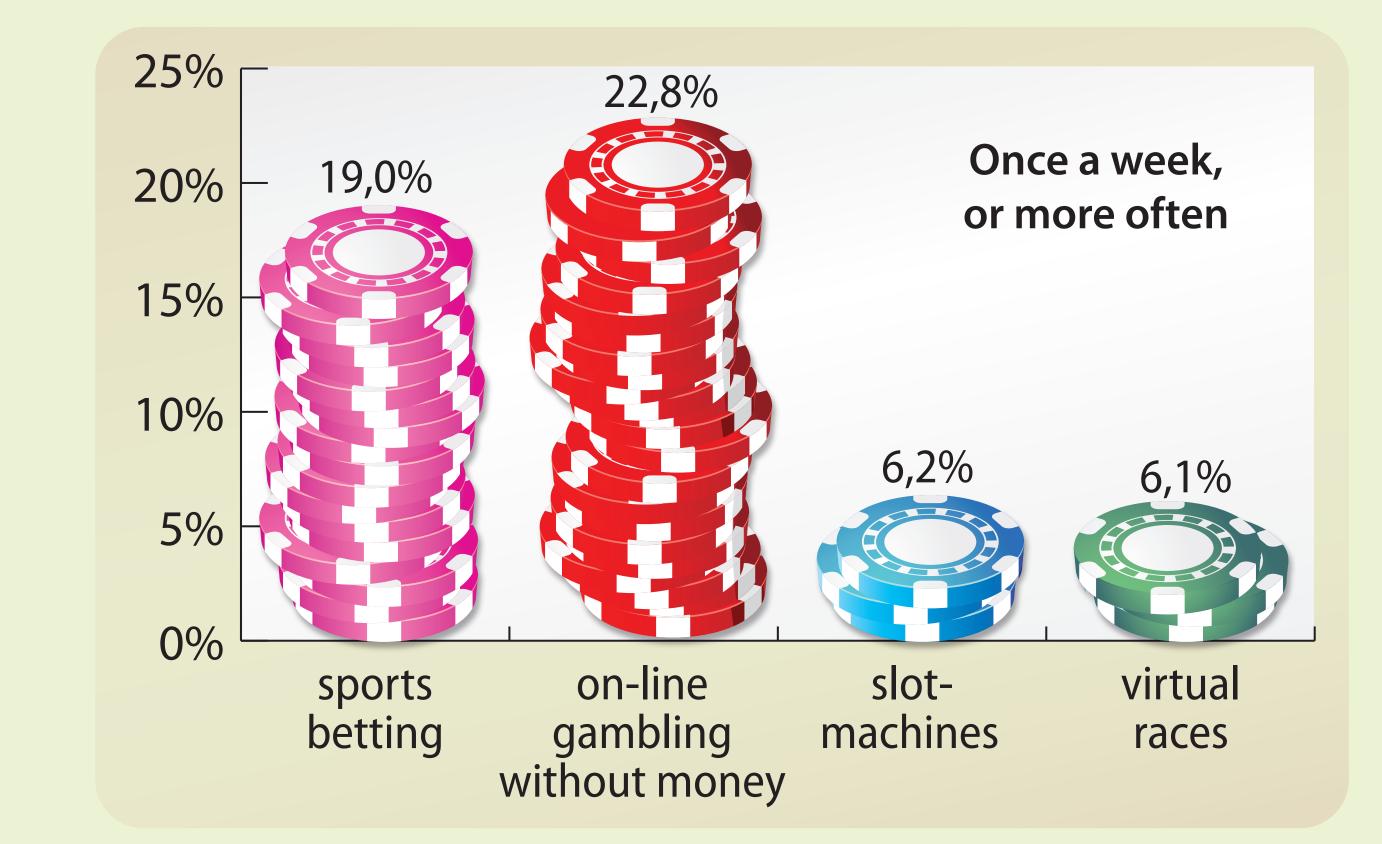
10% engaged in casino games and on-line gambling for money

We also explored how many adolescents gamble once a week, or more often. Results show that 19,0% bet on sport events, 22,8% gamble on-line without money invested, and around 6% of adolescents play slot-machines and virtual races regularly (Picture 3.)

In order to estimate the severity of psychosocial consequences related to adolescent gambling, Canadian Adolescent Gambling Inventory – CAGI (Tremblay et al., 2010) was used. Given the extent to which they feel adverse psychosocial consequences, the adolescents were classified into three risk categories (Picture 4).

An additional objective was to identify some psychosocial and behavioral characteristics of adolescents who have developed gambling problems with the emphasis on risk factors associated with the greater severity of problems (Picture 5).

Picture 3. Frequency of adolescents' regular gambling activities



# RESEARCH-BASED GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE PREVENTION OF YOUTH GAMBLING IN CROATIA

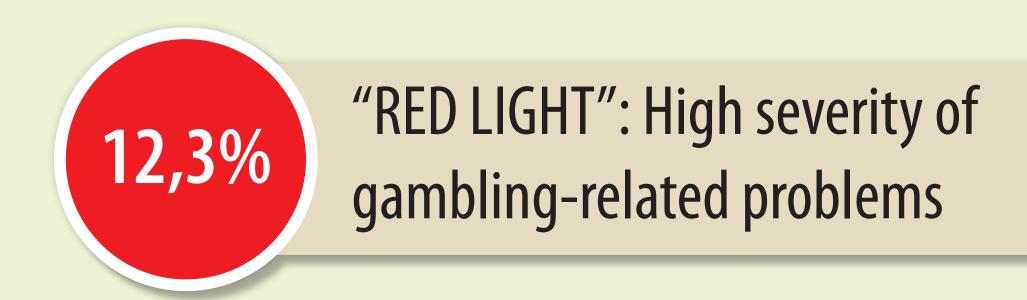
Research findings provide important guidelines for the development and implementation of preventive interventions focused on adolescents and their environment. A comprehensive strategy in the field of youth gambling is needed along with psycho-

Vocational high-school program

More frequent gambling

Poorer understanding

Picture 4. Risk categorization according to CAGI (Tremblay et.al., 2010), N=1.952



"YELLOW LIGHT": Low to medium severity of gambling-related problems

"GREEN LIGHT": Absence of

educational interventions for young people, their families and professionals. Such a strategy should include public policies aimed at compliance with legislation, investment in the new statutory regulations that would develop mechanisms to protect vulnerable populations and, generally speaking, investment in a socially responsible organization of games of chance. One of the main focuses of youth gambling prevention should be on indi-

More hedonistic and less

Motivated by earning money, fun, excitement and a desire

to be better at gambling

Manifestation of other forms

of risk and delinquent behavior

vidual risk and protective factors with emphasis on strengthening youth skills and critical thinking strategies.

Najavits, Grymala, George, 2003; Davis, 2003; Williams, 2002)

## Comprehensive programs in the field of youth gambling prevention

- focus on both knowledge and skills
- show effects on knowledge and behavior
- are implemented in schools - cover all levels of prevention – universal, selective and

- statistical knowledge about gambling, myths and facts about gambling, law on youth gambling, gambling
- information about addictive nature of gambling
- problem solving and decision making skills

Picture 6. Comprehensive model of youth gambling prevention



of parents, teachers and other professionals who work with children and youth

enhancement of

## skills development

 peer resistance skills, assertiveness, problem solving and decision making skills, emotional skills, coping with

# Characteristics of effective youth gambling prevention programs (Williams, West, Simpson, 2008; Ferland, Ladouceur, Vitaro, 2005;

- indicated
- 5-6 lessons are optimal

#### Prevention programs on youth gambling contain wide themes

- industry
- signs of gambling problems and risk factors for gambling
- peer resistance training social-emotional skills

aimed at key risk factors - myths about gambling, poorer understanding of chance, statistiscs and probability, cognitive distorsions...

#### education

law and social policy regulation aimed at responsib organization o

social influences (peers, media, family, wider social environment...

critical thinking

strategies

necessary for

# Sciences, Zagreb, Croatia University of Zagreb, Croatia Youth gambling evidence-based prevention program "Who really wins?"

## 6 lesson program delivered weekly (one 90' lesson per week) by educated staff (leader pair)

Implementation and evaluation plan

1. Youth gambling - myths and facts

Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation

- 2. Chances and probability –how risky is this game?
- 3. Sport betting can we control the game?
- 4. Peer resistance skills
- 5. Coping with stress and emotions
- 6. Problem-solving and decision making skills

#### pilot-implementation

- October November 2012
- 2 high schools in Zagreb gymnasium and vocational
- 4 classes 14-16 years old students

#### process evaluation

- user satisfaction with the program
- monitoring of implementation fidelity
- leaders feedback on program implementation

#### outcome evaluation

- "taylor-made" evaluation instrument for the program
- pre-post test experimental design

### planned activities following the implementation and evaluation

- program adaptation based on the evaluation results
- reporting the results to the shareholders

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the International Consortium on Gambling Research.

