

Romance Scam Recovery Project

Romance Scam Recovery Project (2023–2025) develops and provides low-threshold interventions to support recovery of romance scam victims in Finland.

The project focuses on:

- Online and offline peer group interventions for victims
- Professional individual counseling and social support for victims and to the people close to them
- Preventing romance scams through wide-reaching education and awareness raising
- Training professionals to identify and address the victims and to support their recovery.

Online and offline peer group interventions for victims

Fixed program includes six weekly meetings. Peer support, psychoeducation, professionally guided thematic discussions and skill training of strengthening emotional and personal boundaries are employed to enhance wellbeing and future safety in online communications.

Professional individual counseling and social support for victims and their close ones

The counseling includes from three to six meetings (face-to-face or online). The counseling proceeds the emotional stabilization and crisis intervention to the psychoeducative strengthening of victims' self-knowledge and emotional skills. It includes identifying of needed support (eg. for financial recovery or referral of medical regimen) and addressing it. Then a personal safety plan is set up to prevent victimization.

Preventing romance scams through wide-reaching education and awareness raising

Preventive scam avoidance education and information to the public are spreaded by social media, podcast-series, public lectures and written articles (about romance scams and other related themes e.g. money laundering, social manipulation techniques). Experts by experience are trained to give interviews to media and their stories are published in the project's website.

Online and offline peer group interventions for victims

Open lectures and tailored training offered for professionals in various field (e.g. health and social service workers or financing officers) include guidelines to identify and address possible victims. Supporting materials, articles and victim's referrals. Tailored online courses of professionals are being created with Laurea University of Applied Sciences and Finnish Police University College.

Outcomes of the first project year

Measures of the victims' psychological well-being (e.g. social relations, feelings of loneliness, emotional status) were obtained prior to and following group or individual intervention. In addition, victims' subjective experience about the support were assessed with 11 specific statements following intervention.

Based on this:

- 94 % of the victims feel being supported
- 95 % of the victims feel that contacting the project has helped them
- 86 % of the victims have learned to value themselves better
- 91 % of the victims say that self-awareness has continued after the intervention.

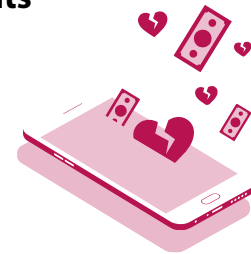
"Thanks to Romance Scam Recovery Project I was able to continue living with trust in the future and I did not even have need to take sick leave from work. A big thank you!"

Woman, 44 years old

48 victims in 4 peer support groups with 15 participants

150+ individual counseling hours

683 professionals trained



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