

VIRTUAL MOBILITY (VM) GRANT REPORT TEMPLATE

This report is submitted by the VM grantee to VNS Manager, who will coordinate the approval on behalf of the Action MC.

Action number: CA18211

VM grant title: Designing a research study protocol on physical&mental health and attitude towards pregnancy and childbirth in North Macedonia

VM grant start and end date: 01/10/2021 to 31/10/2021

Grantee name: Prof. d-r Tatjana Zorcec

Description of the outcomes and achieved outputs (including any specific Action objective and deliverables, or publications resulting from the Virtual Mobility).

1. We prepared the study protocol.

2. We created a questionnaire with questions on the following topics:

- general information (age, socio-economic status, personal status etc.)
- general information regarding physical health during pregnancy (overall physical condition, conceiving, history of pregnancies, physical activity, nutrition habits etc.)
- general information regarding mental health during pregnancy (sleeping habits, mood, lifestyles, social life, professional life etc.)
- opinions, attitudes, fears, expectations of giving birth etc.

Questionnaire was also prepared as online version.

We contacted our potential partners like several gynecologist from the primary health system in the country and two NGO's from the field.

We also obtaining ethical committee approval.

This study will contribute to the following Action's objectives:

- developing a common understanding of birth-related trauma
- building multidisciplinary network of researchers and clinicians around maternity care, perinatal mental health and early childhood development
- facilitating access to a global network of researchers, clinicians and advocacy groups in the field
- providing targeted know-how for the next generation of researchers and clinicians in the field through access to the network
- increasing consolidation and dissemination to maximize translation of research into practice, to bridge current theory-practice gaps bringing evidence to knowledge end users.

Description of the benefits to the COST Action Strategy (what and how).

COST is promoting interdisciplinary networking of researchers and innovators. In this study we have used interdisciplinary approach i.e. joint effort of MDs and psychologists. Interdisciplinary research often results in positive diversity, shared knowledge, brainstorming, freedom of thinking and contributions from various science disciplines. This kind of diversity is giving the best solutions and positive challenges. COST is especially interested in providing opportunities for young researchers. In the study creation we have included young people in early stage of their career assisting in the design, providing technical support and alleviating and promoting networking. As professor at university, we strongly believe that providing contact to young people with more experienced researchers would empower young people and opens their career perspectives.

Furthermore, COST is promoting and spreading excellence and bringing research and innovation divide and participation gaps in Europe. With this study we have created a new research in the country and new instrument that can be used in further occasions. Also we have proposed topic that is not often discussed and promoted in a positive manner. We want to raise the awareness on the importance of the physical and especially mental health during pregnancy.

COST is especially interested in supporting researchers in COST Inclusiveness Target Countries like North Macedonia is. This VMG gave us opportunity to promote research, gain new knowledge and skills and try to influence on general public and other stakeholders.

Description of the virtual collaboration (including constructive reflection on activities undertaken, identified successful practices and lessons learned).

In the Republic of North Macedonia, in the general public or even in the professional circles, giving birth is not a topic that is often discussed and promoted in a positive manner. Birth-related trauma and preventing a possible one, which can affect emotional and psychological outcomes for parents and families, is even more a taboo topic. So working on such interesting topic was very inspirational for us as professionals who are working in the field of perinatal mental and physical health. We went through the literature and researched some studies, learned some new knowledge on the subject and broaden our perspectives. This research will be a great opportunity to learn from the actual experiences of others and based on that experience all of use to grow and improve in future actions and behaviors.

Furthermore, we created a team of experienced and young researchers and with joint effort we created the study design and appropriate questionnaire. Working with young people is always a pleasure especially that we could mentor and teach them some new skills and knowledge, but also learn back by exchanging opinions and ideas.

We also contacted our peers in the health system and established network for successful collaboration in the future.

So, this type of opportunities are great chance for combining research and practice, experience and youth and diversity and mixture.