

Report on the outcomes of a Virtual Mobility¹

Action number: CA18211 - Devotion

Grantee name: Prof Jean Calleja-Agius

Virtual Mobility Details

Title: COVID and You - long-term effects of COVID on mental health: Report on Congress Proceedings

Start and end date: 17/06/2023 to 15/07/2023

Description of the work carried out during the VM

Description of the virtual collaboration and activities carried out during the VM, with focus on the work carried out by the grantee. Any deviations from the initial working plan shall also be described in this section.

(max. 500 words)

The COVID-19 pandemic has effected everyone's lives in some way or other. Emotions of grief, fear, uncertainty and social isolation, together with increased screen time and lack of support from family and friends have negatively affected the mental health of millions of persons worldwide. Now that the WHO has declared that the pandemic is officially over, we are still suffering from the longterm effects of COVID. The main objective of this Virtual Mobility Grant is to create a co-operation both with local partners, partners within COST and Eurochild (<https://www.eurochild.org/>), in order to reach out to local, EU and international policy makers. The main focus has been children, especially those in vulnerable situations.

The outcomes and proceedings of the Congress 'Voice from the Mediterrean to Europe' held during the peak of the COVID pandemic was analysed and written up as an official document.

This report with the proceedings was presented to the President Emeritus of the Republic of Malta, Dr Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, following her keynote speech during the final DEVOTION conference held in Malta in June 2023.

This report will be published as a book, which, together with other important outcomes of this COST action, will eventually be presented to the EU Parliament and other key stakeholders.

Thus, all the work and activities were carried out as planned.

¹ This report is submitted by the grantee to the Action MC for approval and for claiming payment of the awarded grant. The Grant Awarding Coordinator coordinates the evaluation of this report on behalf of the Action MC and instructs the GH for payment of the Grant.

Description of the VM main achievements and planned follow-up activities

Description and assessment of whether the VM achieved its planned goals and expected outcomes, including specific contribution to Action objective and deliverables, or publications resulting from the VM. Agreed plans for future follow-up collaborations shall also be described in this section.

Under the lead of the applicant, Jean Calleja Agius (University of Malta), there was the close involvement of the following participants who had many regular online meetings via Zoom and, when possible, even physically in person:

- Lorella Gatt and Angie Caruana (co-ordinators of Children's and Young people's Council within the Malta Foundation of the Wellbeing of Society). This is a non-profit organisation which was previously known as the President's Foundation of the Wellbeing of Society.
- Her Excellency President Emeritus of Malta, Dr Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, her personal assistant Mariannae Massa, and Estelle Duca (Malta Foundation of the Wellbeing of Society, and Eurochild). Eurochild is a network of organisations and individuals working with and for children in Europe. Eurochild strives for a society where all children and young people grow up happy, healthy, confident and respected as individuals in their own right. The aim of Eurochild is to bring about positive changes in the lives of children, in particular those affected by poverty and disadvantage (www.eurochild.org).
- Olga Gouni (Cosmoanelixis – Greece) who has a experience in organising Children's congresses and had a key role in developing the themes of the Congress. Her focus of interest is psychology and especially prenatal psychology. Olga introduced Prenatal Psychology in Greece and has taught it to graduate professionals in the Kapodistrian University, School of Philosophy, Department of Experimental Pedagogy. She is also a writer and educator for the e-learning program in Prenatal Psychology offered by the Kapodistrian University (EKPA).
- Sandra Morano – (Italy) Professor Morano promoted the first Italian education programme for mothers, midwives and obstetricians. She is the Head of the first Italian Birth Centre, aiming to promote continuity of women-centred care and to reduce caesarian section rates. Currently she teaches Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the Medical School and Midwifery School in Genoa University, and at the Nursing School in Gaslini Hospital. Her fields of interest are promotion of health and normality in pregnancy and childbirth, prevention of perineum disorders and postpartum depression.

This Virtual Mobility Grant was used as part of the capacity building and networking objectives, bringing in important stakeholders from the Euro-Mediterranean region, through the participation of EUROCHILD, and building bridges with politicians and policy makers from the European Union and Euro-Mediterranean region. Deliverables consisted of addressing more appropriate European agencies, including the European Parliament, involved in improving living and working conditions for mothers and their families, especially their children, and provide support during pandemic and beyond.

Consequently, during this VM we drew up of a report, which was presented to local and international policy makers, and eventually will be also presented to the EU Parliament.

The ultimate outcome report will be disseminated not only to participants from the current COST member states but even to organisations from NNC countries, especially those in North Africa who form part of the Mediterranean region, including Tunisia, Libya, Morocco and Egypt. Also IPC countries have been involved, as well as India, through already existing links between members within the network.

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