

“The national implementation of the Belgian best practice on mental health system reform, for the smooth transition from child and adolescent services to adult services” was successfully organised in Cyprus

On Thursday 23rd March 2023, a transnational hybrid meeting took place concerning the national implementation of the Belgian best practice on mental health system reform within the Framework of the EU Joint Action on Implementation of best practices in the area of Mental Health, *JA ImpleMENTAL*, aiming to facilitate the smooth transition from children's and adolescents' mental health services to adult services in Cyprus. The meeting took place in the conference room of Archbishop Makarios III Hospital, and it was well-attended by around 40 participants.

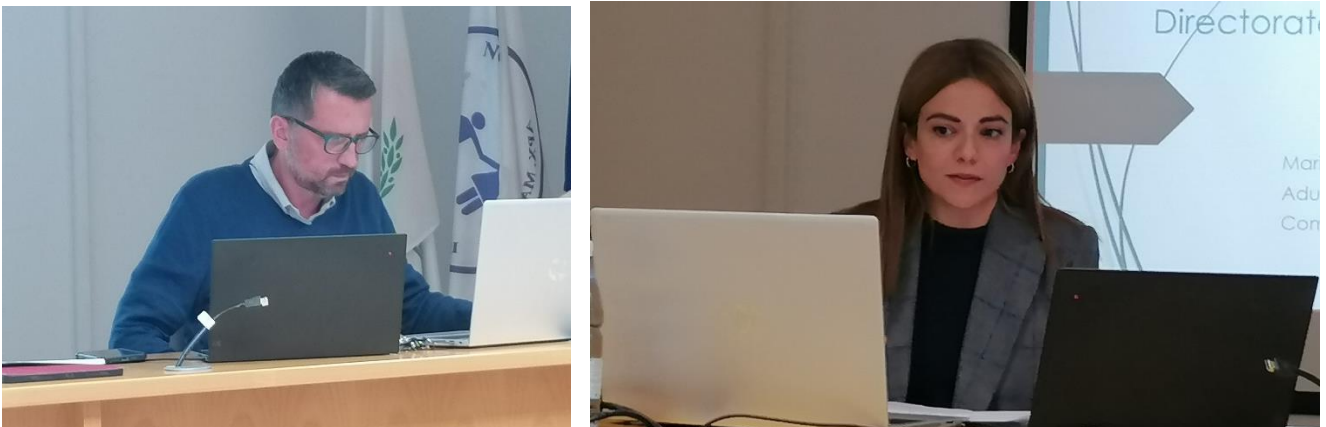


Picture 1. Group photo of JA IMPLEMENTAL team, training seminar participants, and members of the JA ImpleMENTAL Consortium.

Many renowned scientists from Cyprus, Greece, France and Italy joined the training seminar, taking the stage and presenting their work, both onsite and online. Numerous health professionals participated from all structures and centres of the Mental Health Services Directorate, with the objective of gaining an insight into the application of the JA ImpleMENTAL project in some European countries. Finally, members of the JA ImpleMENTAL Consortium including WPLEad teams were invited to participate and share their views.

Dr. Anna Paradeisioti accentuated as she opened the seminar the benefits and the value of the cooperation with our European partners acknowledging their assistance in the enhancement of the Cyprus situation and reform initiative. The presence of Ms Corinne Salinas, European Commission Representative and Project Advisor of the European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA) was especially significant, as she addressed the challenges and expectations of this pilot programme of initiatives, in the context of joint action for the transfer of good practices at a national level among Member States of the European Union. The second speaker was the Coordinator of the European JA ImpleMENTAL Programme, Ms. Vasileia Konte, Head of the Services Directorate of the National Public Health Organization (NPHO) who presented the European JA ImpleMENTAL Programme to health professionals. Ms Konte highlighted the importance of the project in strengthening national initiatives among Member States for the improvement of the mental health services. She also mentioned that one of the positive aspects of belonging to a large EU Network of 21 countries is the possibility to share experiences, common

practices and challenges with other renowned professionals within the project's network. She enlightened the participants about the common implementation strategy that is used within JA ImpleMENTAL, which includes a number of tools to promote the systematic uptake of evidence-based interventions in order to transfer and successfully implement best practices in other countries. She also referred to the specialised support offered by each WP to the countries, including experts' training and assistance provided, not only on the core elements of the best practice but also further beyond, based on the specific national training needs. She also indicated that national authorities should take into account the needs and data of the specific country based on Situation Analysis and Needs Assessment, involving the participation of all national stakeholders from the planning stage of the pilot implementation. Dr. Olga Kalakouta, Senior Officer of Health, and Coordinator of European Affairs of the Ministry of Health also attended the workshop, sharing her own perspective on the significance of this European programme, which is part of Cyprus national strategy for Mental Health. In the context of this workshop, extensive reference was made to the work of the Mental Health Services Directorate as the sole provider of specialised mental health and interprofessional care services. The guest speaker from INSERM France, Professor Marie-Odile Krebs shared the experience of France on services for the transition from child and adolescent services to adult services and informed the participants about the structure and function of the current mental health system in her country. The guest speaker presented her work concerning the review of the transition system, and the experiences gained from the comparison of national system with the model of the Belgian best practice, as well as the benefits of participation in JA ImpleMENTAL.



Picture 2. Dr Lampros Samartzis and Dr. Marianna Antoniadou, SHSO psychiatrists during the presentation session.

The next session was on the presentation of national situation in Cyprus, where Dr Marianna Antoniadou, an adult psychiatrist at the Community Mental Health Services stressed the need of bridging the gap between the adolescent and adult services, pointing out several deficiencies that the current system exhibits. Some examples of these are the lack of a structured and standardized process that can facilitate transition, as well as the absence of well - trained personnel. Adding to these is the limited role of social services of Cyprus concerning transition and the inadequate state funding. Furthermore, she underlined the need for paving the way to a proper care. This needs to be implemented through well thought planning, setting a clear assessment system that would smoothly transfer people to adulthood. A suggestion made by Dr. Antoniadou was to facilitate this process by forming a multidisciplinary group of healthcare professionals that would lay the foundation and the know-how to a smooth transition. Dr. Lampros Samartzis, Psychiatrist and Coordinator leader of Wp5 JAImpleMENTAL, also recognised the flaws and the imbalances between the minors' services and adult treatment. As he illustrated, Cyprus approach embraces the development of networks at a national level, with teams comprising of adult psychiatrists, children and adolescent psychiatrists, mental nurses, psychologists, occupational therapists, and general

physicians. Dr Samartzis argued in favour of forming new collaborations between hospital and community mental health services, as well as adult services that would also entail substance detox and rehab community teams. As he indicated a major area of improvement in the current approach consists the protection of human rights, especially during hospitalisation and court process, as well as the elimination of discrimination in society. Finally, he welcomed the benefits and the great advantage of the JA ImpleMENTAL for the establishment of a solid transition process in Cyprus, as well as the involvement of key stakeholders in the decision making and formation of this new system.

The next part of the workshop was a training session provided by Dr Alberto Parabiaghi, MD, PhD Department of Health Policy Unit for Quality of Care and Rights Promotion in Mental Health Istituto di Ricerche Farmacologiche "Mario Negri"-IRCCS on transition between child, adolescent and adult mental health services: issues and proposals for improvement, where the speaker provided scientific evidence on the transition age services and referred to the gaps observed in the transition of patients from children's services to adult services. He provided evidence of the benefits of implementing a dedicated system on transition age in Cyprus.



Picture 3. Brainstorming activity during workshop's training session.

The workshop came to an end with the organisation of an experiential session and the extraction of SWOT analysis. During the workshop and the group work activity, the participants exchanged views on the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the existing mental health service delivery system in Cyprus, as well as the future changes that needed to be incorporated to ensure patients' smooth transition.

The workshop was organised this year for the first time and was encountered with great success. It will be repeated in the coming months, involving the participation of local authorities and organisations in the field of mental health and patients' rights. The aim of the event will be to touch on the issues faced by people with mental health disorders, suggesting solutions and incorporating changes, setting the need for the creation of new institutions, as well as the appropriate infrastructure needed to support patients. The timetable of the workshop can be found in the following [link](#) and more information on the work of the Directorate of Mental Health Services can be found at: <https://shso.org.cy/hospital/iperisies-psixikis-igeias/>

For further information on JA Implemental project: <https://ja-implmental.eu/>