

FIGHTING THE STIGMA OF DEMENTIA

The Alzheimer Europe Conference and the figure of the Peer Support Worker in dementia for a better quality of life



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According to WHO, currently more than 55 million people live with dementia worldwide, and there are nearly 10 million new cases every year.

Their growing number calls for more and more attention to be paid to the topic, in order to enhance the quality of life of people with dementia and their caregivers through supportive and multidimensional actions. This is precisely a crucial issue that was the subject of rich discussions and reflections during the Alzheimer Europe Conference and PIA project partners' meeting, events that took place from 17th to 21st October 2022 in Bucharest, Romania.

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The 32nd Alzheimer Europe Conference

The event was organised in cooperation with the Societatea Română Alzheimer and occurred within place from 17th to 19th October in Bucharest. Under the motto 'Building Bridges', the 2022 Conference was a great opportunity to build networks and brought together various people: some with dementia, their caregivers, volunteers and staff from Alzheimer's associations, policy makers, health and social care professionals, researchers, academics and industry representatives from all over Europe and abroad.

In order to promote a multidimensional and multidisciplinary approach to dementia, numerous initiatives were presented and key topics were discussed. Among these, the PIA project was also the subject of the Alzheimer Europe conference and was shared with all participants attending the conference.



Psychologist Marianna Tsatali, representing the Greek partner organisation Alzheimer Hellas and the whole partnership, presented the PIA project and stated that *"Due to the fact that a basic thematic category of the AE conference was caregivers and dementia services across countries, as well as dementia friendly initiatives, the PIA project was a successful input in the Conference's activities having the opportunity to underline the significant activities delivered by the PSWs across EU countries"*.

Partners' cooperation during the meeting in Romania

On the 20th and 21st October 2022, after the conference, the 2nd Transnational Partner Meeting took place, hosted by the partner organisation *Asociatia Habilitas*.

During the meeting, all 5 partner organisations reviewed the project and discussed the steps and activities that are currently in place or will happen in the coming months. Over the past months, the partners have created and developed the Peer Support Worker Training Curriculum, generating the theoretical and practical content to achieve the learning objectives. Each organisation shared their considerations based on their national contexts and identified needs.

This discussion provided various insights on how the PIA project can be pivotal for improving the quality of life of people with dementia and their caregivers. The next steps will focus on the implementation in each partner country of pilot course to become a Peer Support Worker and the completion of the digital platform dedicated to them to share experiences and feedback, both at national and European level.



Special attention was given to the evaluation of the quality and impact of the project itself on the participants and on the European landscape, as well as to the strategies for policy change that will be developed during the third and final project outcome.

NOTES TO EDITORS

- To find out more about the PIA project and to keep up to date with its activities, follow us on the project website www.piaproject.eu and on the main social networks with the hashtag #pia_project
- PIA is co-funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ programme through project agreement no. 2021-1-NO01-KA220-ADU-000026860