

# Depression has many faces



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## EAAD Newsletter - April 2024

### Dear EAAD Partners, Colleagues and Friends

I hope 2024 has been treating you well this far. This newsletter contains exciting updates on closed, ongoing and new projects.

EAAD has been extremely successful with applying for EU-funded projects and this success story continues. We are thrilled to announce that we have been given an operational grant (EAAD-grow) providing us with structural funding. Thanks to the EU4Health-Programme, we will be able to increase EAAD's PR activities and to organise the first European Patient Congress online in December 2024.

In total, the EAAD consortium is presently leading four EU-funded projects (EAAD-Best, MENTBEST, MESUR, EAAD-grow) and we are also involved in PROSPERH which allows us to build on the successful work done by the MENTUPP consortium, headed by Ella Arensman. This is quite unique and points to the internationally recognised excellence of EAAD and all its members.

We have also included a Country Spotlight on Italy in this newsletter as well as a Spotlight on Our People so you get to find out about what it's like to work for EAAD.

From all of us at EAAD, we hope you enjoy this newsletter.

Warm regards

## Country Spotlight on Italy

### **iFightDepression: A Turning Point in Depression Management and Suicide Prevention**

Mental health is a central theme in the public healthcare debate. Coordinated by the Alto Adige Health Center, with Prof. Andreas Conca as the Principal Investigator, our project aimed to train general practitioners (GPs) in recognising, diagnosing, and managing depression based on a dedicated internet-based platform.

Studies have shown that training primary care doctors to recognise and manage depression can significantly improve outcomes for patients, especially for those facing a recent onset of the condition. While patients with recurrent or chronic depression may require more targeted approaches, adequate training of GPs is crucial in the prevention of suicide.

The Italian context presents unique challenges: in recent years, there has been a reduction in the number of primary care doctors, dropping from 40,250 in 2021 to a forecast of only 36,628 by 2025.





## Let's Get to Work!

The workplace has seen rapid changes in recent years - driven by digital and green transitions and the COVID-19 pandemic. New ways of working can affect people's physical and mental health. Whilst they can be health-promoting, how this can be achieved in practice needs exploration.

Companies and their staff need tools and resources that enhance awareness, promote physical and mental health, support self-management and signpost pathways for clinical or coaching-related support. An international consortium of 21 partners from 19 countries will work together to develop and validate the multi-level EU-funded PROSPERH intervention, to be delivered via the online PROSPERH portal.

Policy makers need the latest evidence on healthy workplaces and advice on how governments and other stakeholders can create the right environment for change. Key project outcomes will include policy guidelines and recommendations as well as a roadmap for making the PROSPERH portal freely available to companies.

The focus will be on sectors experiencing significant change and challenges in physical and mental health (Telework/ICT-based mobile work, Health and Construction).

Once developed, the intervention will be tested in Albania, Australia, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Kosovo, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Turkey. PROSPERH is led by Professor Ella Arensman, Head of the School of Public Health, Professor of Public Mental Health, UCC and Chief Scientist, National Suicide Research Foundation, and co-led by Dr Eve Griffin, Chief Executive Officer, National Suicide Research Foundation.

Learn more about the PROSPERH project, consortium partners and related research: <https://prosperh.eu/>

## MESUR Plenary Meeting in Bulgaria



A big thank you goes out to all our project partners and the dedicated members of our refugee advisory group for their participation and collaborative spirit. We look forward to achieving our forthcoming milestones hand in hand with you.

MESUR - Mental Health Support for Ukrainian Refugees - is a two-year EU co-funded project aimed at providing mental health support to migrant and refugee populations, with a special focus on displaced individuals from Ukraine.

For more information about MESUR, please visit: <https://ifightdepression.com/en/mesur>

*If you are a displaced person from Ukraine seeking self-help support in your current country of residence within the EU, please visit the following websites:*

- Ukrainian: <https://tool.ifightdepression.com/ru-AD/login?languageswitch=1>
- Russian: <https://tool.ifightdepression.com/ua-AD/login?languageswitch=1>

### **EAAD-Best from Start to Finish!**

The EAAD-Best consortium held its final project event in Brussels on 4 March 2024. The conference was opened by Ugo Guarnacci, representative of HaDEA and EU4Health project

were addressed via the community-based 4-level intervention concept – this being the most broadly implemented and best evaluated approach in suicide prevention globally. To date, the [4-level intervention](#) has been implemented in more than 130 regions in 16 countries.

Within EAAD-Best, the [4-level intervention](#) was introduced in Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Italy and Poland for the first time and to further regions in Hungary, Ireland and Spain. Promotion of the [iFightDepression® tool](#), an internet-based self-management tool for patients with depression, and more broadly, the [iFightDepression® awareness website](#) both featured in the project.



Since preventing depression and suicidal behaviour is a complex task that goes beyond the boundaries of healthcare, the event was open to all stakeholders, policy makers, like-minded research consortia, civil society, foundations and organisations interested in the topic.

Rainer Mere, Project Manager at the [Estonian-Swedish Mental Health and Suicidology Institute](#), emphasised the importance of establishing and guiding local alliances to become simultaneously active on all four intervention levels.

Piotr Toczyski, Principal Investigator at [Maria Grzegorzewska University](#), highlighted the positive impact of online self-help tools in the treatment of depression and prevention of an increase in depressive symptoms. He spoke about the importance of building and strengthening collaboration among local community helpers such as GPs, psychiatrists,



Prof. Chantal van Audenhove, Principal Investigator at [LUCAS KU Leuven](#) (Centre for Healthcare Research and Consulting), shared a small extract of the results of the EAAD-Best evaluation, showing the success of the trainings held as well as the positive impact of the use of the [iFightDepression® tool](#).

Participants gathered in thought-provoking workshops to discuss concrete steps on how to initiate a community-based intervention and how to scale it up nationally and make it sustainable. Attendees also discussed the crucial role of the media in preventing and triggering depression and suicidal behavior, as well as congruent strategies to set up effective PR activities.



*Katharina Schnitzspahn moderating one of the workshops*

## **Spotlight on Our People**

Katharina Schnitzspahn



***Could you share some of your career history and why you decided to work for a non-profit organization, and in particular, EAAD?***

Before joining EAAD, I worked at different universities in Europe. I was teaching and supervising students and conducted research on cognitive and emotional development. After several years in this job, I was looking for a change and wanted to do something more applied in the field of clinical psychology. When looking for jobs, I quickly came across the EAAD ad. I loved the cause of the organisation as well as the outlook of working on international projects within a small, motivated team.

***How would you describe your job role at EAAD in one sentence?***

I manage projects and people.

***What are the three most important skills you need in your job role?***

*Strong communication, organisation, and flexibility.*

***What do you consider the biggest highlight in your work with EAAD so far?***

It is difficult to pick just one, but the kick-off meeting of our project MENTBEST that started in 2023 was special to me. I started working on the project preparations right when I joined EAAD and it felt rewarding to see it come alive after several months of paperwork.

***And what has been the toughest challenge?***

Since we are a very small team, everyone has several roles and a wide variety of tasks. Spending not just hours, but days and sometimes weeks on financial reporting has been challenging for me as a trained psychologist.

***And lastly – what is your secret talent no one knows about?***

I enjoy singing and joined a Women's Choir in Frankfurt that allows me to combine my love for music with my political beliefs.





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For more information about the EAAD's work or about how to become a member, please visit our website: [European Alliance Against Depression - Home \(eaad.net\)](http://EuropeanAllianceAgainstDepression.com)



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