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PRESS RELEASE

Vocational training in illicit drug addiction: Equipping health care practitioners with addiction treatment competences and techniques (CARE4SUD)

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The CARE4SUD project is being implemented by Klaipėdos Ernesto Galvanausko profesinio mokymo centras (Lithuania) in partnership with Institut Za Raziskave In Razvoj Utrip Zavod (Slovenia), Sosu Ostjylland (Denmark), Universidade do Porto (Portugal), Direcția de Asistență Socială și Medicală Cluj-Napoca (Romania) and Institute of Social Solidarity and Wellbeing: Social Mind (Greece) and its overall objective is to ensure a higher professionalism of the healthcare work force in the illicit drug addiction field at national and European level. The project is co-funded by the Erasmus + Programme of the European Union (KA 220 VET – Cooperation partnerships in vocational education and training).

Within one of the work packages of the project entitled *Review and Analysis Report: Sharper lens on illicit drug addiction educational programmes (WP 2)*, a comprehensive mapping review on the availability of EU addiction training opportunities was carried out and the partners explored the available national educational programmes/courses that have the potential to increase healthcare workers' and physicians' skills in identifying and managing patients whose medical problems are caused by or may be exacerbated by illicit drug use disorders.

This activity was followed by the elaboration of Focus Groups involving 10 addictologists and 10 healthcare workers from each partner country (n= 120). The purpose of the focus groups was to obtain insights into drug use from multiple perspectives and to understand knowledge gaps in drug prevention and treatment education to develop a core set of competencies to address the specific needs of the professionals working in the healthcare industry. A range of healthcare workers with experience in the illicit drug addiction field took part in the focus groups (psychiatrists, nurses, general practitioners, psychologists, social workers, addiction counselors, etc).

Then, to explore the gaps and needs in health care training in the illicit drug addiction field, 27 interviews were conducted with individuals who had used or are currently using illicit drugs. The aim was to define the needs and shortages in the practice context and forward-looking skills in the addiction health training in the six participating countries and provide an inventory of the national skill gaps and needs, also contributing to a participatory approach and the co-construction of the curricula.

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