



EPIONI

GREEK CARERS NETWORK



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Greek Carers Network EPIONI

Non-profit association

15 Victoros Ougo Str., Athens, P.C. 104-37

Tax Identification Number: 997021 473 - Tax Office: A 'ATHENS

Tel. +30 211 850 7085, +30 6946 00 35 22 (WhatsApp), Fax .: +30 210 440 6003

www.epioni.gr info@epioni.gr

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Want to donate and support our work?

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For your donations, it is necessary to inform us at: info@epioni.gr

Contents

A few words about Epioni	4
Foreword	5
INFORMATIVE EVENTS	
Supporting people with heart disease and the contribution of their carers -21.05.2021	6
Caring for Carers - Balancing the personal and professional life of carers in the era of COVID-19 24.9.2021	7
Workshop on "Caregivers and Depression" - 22.10.2021	9
EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES	
Workshop for carers of young carers with parents with mental illness. 25.10.2021	11
"Rights of people with dementia and depression in old age" 28.5.2021, 14-15.6.2021, 29/9, 13/10, 26/10, 11/11, 10.12.2021	12
IMPLEMENTATION OF EU PROJECTS	
Erasmus+ KA1 project "ACCEUEDU"	13
Meeting of the Hi-Ability project	14
Awareness Events	16
Internship Program - Capacity Building	16
Social Media	17
EU Projects approved in 2021	18

A few words about EPIONI

Greek Carers Network EPIONI is a national non-profit organization established in 2017 by a group of citizens who are caregivers or former caregivers. It is governed by its Board of Directors, supported by a Scientific Committee and an Audit Committee. Our aim is to support individuals who work as informal, unpaid carers of family members or friends who are struggling with physical or mental illness, disability or addiction.

Our services include providing information about health issues and sharing good practices, providing carers with practical advice and emotional support, as well as facilitating the development of problem-solving skills. We also work to help service users identify and utilize available resources from their local communities. In order to materialize its vision for carers in Greece, EPIONI is also actively involved in promoting key policy changes through government legislation. In order to improve the quality of its services, EPIONI utilizes the feedback of its constituencies and stakeholders. Additionally, quality monitoring and evaluation extends on three levels: The quality national meetings; the quality of collaboration (including overall project quality as perceived by the project partners); the quality of outputs subject to a review process and end-user evaluation.

The association takes initiatives within European programs aimed at exchanging good practices for informing Greek caregivers. Finally, it is worth mentioning the stable cooperation with federations such as Eurocarers and the Hellenic Patients' Association for the promotion of policies for carers.

Message from our President

Informal caregivers, whether parents, relatives, friends or neighbours, are those who offer pro bono practical support and care to their loved ones.

Informal caregiving is often a physically demanding and psychologically challenging process, mainly because of the increased responsibilities it carries.

The role of the caregiver requires constant hard work, financial and emotional costs, personal sacrifice, and strong physical and mental stamina.

The COVID-19 pandemic has left none of us unaffected, but even more so the caregivers and health professionals who have been on the front line of these unprecedented health conditions.

One of the important news of the year was the adoption of the European Directive on family carers with the Labour Law 4808/2021.

We organised a number of online or hybrid events to inform and support carers. The events were on heart disease and mental health, on the occasion of the World Mental Health Day, the European Carers Day and the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Representatives of the association participated in working meetings for the assertion of carers' rights and in EU projects.

We would like to thank our members, partners and volunteers for their cooperation for another year and wish everyone a constructive year. I am counting on the contribution of each and every one of you and would like to sincerely thank you for your continuous support and enthusiastic commitment towards achieving EPIONI missions.

Spyros Zorbas

EPIONI President



Supporting people with heart disease and the contribution of their carers 21.05.2021

Epioni in collaboration with the organizations "Heart of the Child", "Skytali" and the "Association of Cardiac Officers of the Navy and Friends" on Friday, May 21, 2021, successfully held a webinar under the auspices of the Municipality of Athens, the Hellenic College of Cardiology and Metabolism, the Hellenic Psychiatric Association and the Global HEART Hub on "Support for people with heart disease and the contribution of their caregivers". The event was attended by outstanding scientists who support patients with heart disease.

Dr. Elias Tsougos, referred to the value of physical exercise. The endocrinologist Mrs. Vaya Lampadiari Associate Professor of Pathology referred to the relationship between diabetes and heart disease. The Professor of Cardiology of the University of Athens Ignatios Economidis referred to the effects of smoking and the Psychologist Fotis Varelas, from the association "The Heart of the Child", referred to the contribution of caregivers in the management of preoperative anxiety of children with congenital heart disease. Cardiologist Christos Maniotis and Researcher Omiros Papadopoulos referred to applications of innovative technologies of the NCSR Demokritos that support the daily life of patients with heart diseases. Mr. Sotiris Charalambous, heart transplant recipient and member of the Board of Directors of Skytali association, spoke about the



importance of the caregiver of a patient with heart failure at the stage of heart transplantation. The allergist and psychotherapist Ms Kelly Panagioto-poulou referred to the contribution of the caregiver of a person with heart disease in managing the psychological effects of coronavirus. Stavros Terzakis, patient advocate and vice-president of the association Epioni and member of the Board of Directors of the Association of Cardiac Officers of the Navy, Coast Guard and Friendsspoke about ways to ensure blood donation for heart patients. Finally, Mr. Christos Nikas, CEO of Emergency Help, spoke about the management of patients with COVID-19 through telemedicine.

The sponsors of the webinar were the Saronic Nephrological Center, Emergency Help and Novartis (Hellas).

Communication sponsors were the informative websites:
www.psychologynow.gr ,
www.dailypharmanews.gr and
www.iatronet.gr

Caring for Carers - Balancing the personal and professional life of carers in the era of COVID-19 24.9.2021

On 24 September 2021, Epioni successfully organized a workshop focusing on family caregivers. The event was held under the auspices of the Municipality of Vari - Voula - Vouliagmeni, the Hellenic Psychiatric Association and was supported by the Office of the European Parliament in Greece. Representatives of institutions from Greece and abroad participated. Indicatively, representatives from Belgium, Serbia, Italy, Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia and Turkey participated.

Co-organizers were Obrela, EDRA, the 4th Psychiatric Admissions Department of the Psychiatric Hospital of Attica, the Hellenic Centre for Mental Health and Research, ENALMH, The Panhellenic Federation of People with Multiple Sclerosis (POMSKP), the association "The Heart of the Child", the Hellenic Society for Alzheimer's Disease and Related



Disorders of Chalkida, the Society of Social Psychiatry P. Sakellaropoulos and the Laboratory of Hygiene and Epidemiology of the Department of Public and Community Health of the University of West Attica.



The hybrid conference was held at the Amarilia Hotel in Vouliagmeni and hosted Mr Stecy Yghemonos, Director of the Eurocarers Federation, who spoke about the impact of COVID-19 on carers at a European level. Dr Kelly Panagiotopoulou who spoke about the prevention of

5th Annual Event

**Caring
for Carers**

Balancing the personal and professional life
of carers in the era of COVID-19

With the support of the office of the
European Parliament in Greece



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Friday
24.9.21
at 15:00

Caring for Carers - Balancing the personal and professional life of carers in the era of COVID-19 - 24.9.2021

carers' depression. Mr Dimitrios Nikolsky referred to the institution of the personal assistant representing the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Ms Noor Seghers from KU Leuven University reported on good practices in supporting carers in Belgium. Finally, Mr Christos Prapas, Lecturer in Applications from the University of West Attica, spoke about the importance of carer support as a public and community health issue.



The conference was organized with the support of the MEP Mr. Stelios Kymouropoulos, the State MP Ms. Marietta Giannakou and the Mayor of Vari - Voula - Vouliagmeni Grigoris Konstantellos who in their presentations mentioned the need for additional support for informal caregivers.

The sponsors of the conference were Pfizer, Janssen Greece and Pharmaserve Lilly.

Communication sponsors were www.psychologynow.gr , www.iatronet.gr



Event on "Caregivers and Depression" 22.10.2021

On October 22, 2021, Epioni organized a workshop on "Caregivers and Depression". The event was held under the auspices of the Hellenic Psychiatric Association and was supported by the Laboratory of Hygiene and Epidemiology of the Department of Public and Community Health of the University of West Attica.

Other supporters were: Society of Social Psychiatry P. Sakellaropoulos, Society for Psychosocial Research and Intervention E.P.S.E.P., EUFAMI, Alzheimer Hellas, Alzheimer Chalkida, Obrela, EDRA, 4th Psychiatric Admissions Department of the Attica Psychiatric Hospital, Hellenic Centre for Mental Health and Research and the ENALMH network.



MEP Stelios Kypouropoulos delivered a welcome speech and referred to the multifunctional and multilevel social work of caregivers.

The following is the greeting of Mr. Kypouropoulos:

"Dear participants,

It is with great pleasure and honour that

I support today, another excellent event of the "Greek Carers Network EPIONI".

It is a model organisation in Greece, which systematically deals with the defence and dissemination of the rights of a very important and numerous population group, that of informal carers, always based on European standards.

Informal caregivers, whether parents, relatives, friends or neighbours, are those who always offer pro bono services of practical support and care to those in need.

Informal caregiving is often a physically demanding and psychologically challenging process, mainly due to the increased volume of responsibilities that it carries. Moreover, when care becomes long-term and in the absence of a wider supportive social network, unpleasant feelings of exhaustion, frustration, sadness and guilt can develop.

As the needs for care services are increasing across Europe and as informal carers are gradually being recognised as the 'pillars' of national health and welfare systems, it is our duty to highlight and recognise their multifunctional and multi-layered social work.

Depression is a real challenge for modern carers and we must provide them with maximum emotional support, while defending their labour, educational, political and social rights by all

Event on "Caregivers and Depression"
22.10.2021

2nd event

CAREGIVERS and DEPRESSION

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Friday
22.10.21
at 15:00

possible means. In conclusion, I wish every success to the proceedings of today's workshop and I am sure that it will be a highly rewarding experience for all. Thank you very much. Stelios Kypyropoulos"

The conference hosted important scientists such as the psychiatrists

Georgios Christodoulou, Dimitrios Kontis, Dimitrios Roukas and the Lecturer of Applications of the University of West Attica Mr Christos Prapas.

Finally, the Director of the European Federation of Associations of Families of People with Mental Illness (EUFAMI), Mr John Saunders, made a presentation.

The event sponsors were: VIANEX, Pfizer, Janssen Greece, Interamerican and the Nephrology Center of Saronicus.

Communication sponsors were:
www.healthdaily.gr, www.iatronet.gr
www.psychologynow.gr

Κατάθλιψη στην Ελλάδα.
Επιπτώσεις της πανδημίας στο γενικό
πληθυσμό και στους φροντιστές

Δημήτρης Ρούκας
Στρατιωτικός Ψυχίατρος
2^η Διαδικτυακή Ημερίδα ΕΠΙΟΝΗ
22 Οκτωβρίου 2021

Κατάθλιψη

- Η κλινική κατάθλιψη είναι σοβαρή ψυχική διαταραχή που επηρεάζει:
 - Το συναίσθημα
 - Την σκέψη
 - Την διάθεση
- Παρεμβάλει σημαντικά στην καθημερινή λειτουργικότητα του ατόμου
- Είναι πολύ συχνή και αποτελεί σημαντική αιτία ανικανότητας
- Παγκόσμια δύναται να προσβάλλει 1 στους 6 ανθρώπους

Event for young carers with parents with mental illness.

25.10.2021

On 25 October 2021, Epioni successfully organized at INNOVATHENS: Innovation Hub & Entrepreneurship Hub at Technopolis of the Municipality of Athens, an event for young caregivers with parents with mental health problems.

The workshop was welcomed by the Member of the European Parliament Ms Elena Kountoura.



The conference hosted notable speakers such as psychiatrists Orestis Giotakos and Georgia Balta.

John Saunders, Director of the European Federation of Associations of Families of People with Mental Illness (EUFAMI), spoke about the depression experienced by families.

Stefania Buoni, president of the Italian organisation COMIP, spoke about the children of parents with mental health problems and provided suggestions and



WEBINAR

Young carers of parents with mental illness

Monday **25.10.21** at 10:00 - 11:00

INNOVATHENS / Technopolis City of Athens

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good practices to support them.

The conference was supported by: Society of Social Psychiatry P. Sakellariopoulos, Obrela, EDRA, and the European Network of Active Living for Mental Health (ENALMH).



Sponsors: Lundbeck, Interamerican and the Saronic Nephrological Centre.

Communication sponsors:

www.psychologynow.gr,

www.iatronet.gr , www.healthdaily.gr

The meeting took place in the framework of the Erasmus+ Share4Carers project featuring the following partners: Dynami Zois, EPIONI, Gaziantep University, COMIP, Centre Neuro Psychiatrique Saint-Martin, EUFAMI, Fondazione Di Liegro.

"Rights of people with dementia and depression in old age"

28.5.2021, 14-15.6.2021, 29/9, 13/10, 26/10, 11/11, 10.12.2021

The project "Support for Human Rights of the Golden Age" was implemented in the framework of the Active citizens fund project by the Hellenic Society for Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders of Chalkida and our association as partner.

Older people face challenges of ageism, poverty and abuse, which limit their rights and social contribution, all over the world. More specifically, people with mental health conditions in old age face barriers to their equal participation in society as a consequence of stigma, fear and avoidance.

A series of training sessions were held on:

- current scientific evidence on dementia and depression in old age,
- issues relating to the rights of this social group and family carers,
- issues relating to the prevention and treatment of elder abuse with a focus on people with dementia and depression in old age,
- communication facilitation skills,
- skills in crisis management in older people with dementia and depression.

The actions contributed to the awareness-raising of the public officials

of Central Greece, in their relations with citizens, referring to: the special care for elderly people with dementia and depression, the discrete and sensitive treatment of relevant issues and the facilitation of communication with vulnerable people and their families.

The €12 million Active citizens fund is funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway and is part of the European Economic Area (EEA) funding mechanism for the period 2014 - 2021, known as EEA Grants.

The programme aims to strengthen and enhance the sustainability of civil society and highlight its role in promoting democratic processes, enhancing citizens' participation in public life and defending human rights. The Active citizens fund grant for Greece is managed jointly by the Bodossaki Foundation and SolidarityNow.



Erasmus+ KA1 project "ACCEUEDU"

The Erasmus+ KA1 project "ACCEUEDU" Access and management of European funding for adult education providers active in the field of mental health" is a project with key objectives:

- 1) The cooperation between mental health organizations in Greece. Specifically, Epioni, EDRA, PEPSAEE, E.K.Ps. P. Sakellaropoulos, Alzheimer Hellas and EPSEP will participate in joint training and networking activities.
- 2) The qualitative upgrading of the skills of the staff of Greek non-governmental organisations active in the field of mental health in the writing and management of European Programmes.

The project includes two five-day training seminars in Limassol provided by the Shipcon training organisation.

The first training seminar was successfully held from 15 to 19 November 2021 in Limassol

The second 5-day seminar will take place in Limassol from 5 to 8 April 2022.

Within the framework of the ACCEUEDU project, the Greek participants will conduct visits to the European University Cyprus, the Open University of Cyprus and the University of Cyprus in Nicosia.

The partnership consists of six organisations. Specifically:

1. Greek Caregivers Network Epioni.
2. Panhellenic Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Vocational Reintegration (PEPSAEE).
3. Social Cooperative Activities for Vulnerable Groups EDPA
4. Society for Psychosocial Research and Intervention (EPSEP)
5. Society of Social Psychiatry P. Sakellaropoulos (EKPSP Sakellaropoulos)
6. Alzheimer Hellas

Receiving and training organisations:

1. ShipCon Limassol Ltd.
2. University of Cyprus
3. European University Cyprus



Meeting in the framework of the Hi-Ability project

On 9-10 November 2021 the partners of the Hi-Ability project - EASPD from Belgium, CONTROVENTO and Trekkify from Italy, EPIONI and EPOS Filis from Greece and the Health Life Academy from Croatia held their 2nd international meeting in Greece.

During this meeting they discussed the activities related to the project and gave an overview of the project. They also mentioned the new toolkit under development for trainers of people with intellectual disabilities outside the formal education system, which will be available by the end of the year. The toolkit provides a specific curriculum and training structure that can be used by trainers.

The first workshop for trainers was held in Athens from 8 to 11 November. During the training, 14 participating

trainers working with adults with intellectual disabilities and staff members of the partner organisations active in the field of outdoor education reviewed the 8 modules designed by the project partners. The training also enabled the participants to improve their skills in the field of outdoor education and environmental education.

The toolkit will serve as a guide for adult educators to be able to apply the principles of environmental education and outdoor learning to the training of people from vulnerable groups. In addition, the toolkit provides guidelines for trainees, trainers and organisations.



Co-funded by
the European Union





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Free Counselling Support

The association **Epioni** enables informal caregivers to receive
free **consulting services**

and participate in a **Counselling and Self-Awareness Group**

by graduates and seniors of the Wilhelm Reich Center for Psychotherapy and Counseling.

Individual counselling sessions

They provide a safe and confidential environment where the carer can consult, process and resolve issues concerning their relationships (with the carer, as well as with their family and wider environment), their difficulties, their aspirations and their problems.

The session can be weekly or fortnightly, lasts one hour (60') and the maximum number of sessions is 12.

Counselling and self-awareness groups

Group counselling provides a context characterised by security and confidentiality on the one hand, and the possibility of sharing and contact with others in the same position, in the demanding and complex role of caregiver on the other.

The Group allows us to share, listen and be heard. It helps us to identify problems and change them, to get strength, creativity and joy.

Methods used are verbal communication between members and sharing as well as actions/exercises for activation and relaxation of the body, role-playing and activities aimed at empowerment and creativity!

This model has been used for more than 35 years in Greece in various populations and target groups (patients, parents, adolescents, health professionals, etc.).

The frequency can be 2.5 hours every 15 days (or two hours every week).

It is led by two coordinating psychotherapists/counsellors.

The Group is much better to be conducted in person (with a vaccination certificate and observance of safety measures and distances, unless for insurmountable reasons it has to be conducted online).

Membership in the group will be based on an interview with the group coordinator, or on a referral from the counsellor with whom the member has individual sessions.

Registration forms:

Stavros Terzakis

6977 80 93 08

email: sterz@tee.gr - infoepioni@gmail.com

••• Cooperation with the
••• Centre for Psychotherapy
••• & Counselling "Wilhelm Reich"



Awareness Events

The carers' cafe

During the year, 5 monthly meetings were held in cafes in Agia Paraskevi, in order to exchange knowledge, experiences and good practices for the everyday life of caregivers.



Informal Caregivers and Stigma: Ways of coping

Our association in the context of its cooperation with the Society of Social Psychiatry P. Sakellaropoulos carried out a communication action on the occasion of the European Carers Day on 6.10.2021



Internship Program - Capacity Building

And in 2021 our association worked with volunteers doing their practical work through the "erasmusintern" and "eu4eu" projects.



For the purposes of the association, the HIGGS co-working space and the office



space at ORBEAT were rented. Also used were premises in Stoupathio and privately owned premises in Mesogeion Street where office equipment was purchased through a donation from Aigeas AMKE.

Social Media

The social media presence was notable thanks to the support of students during their internships.

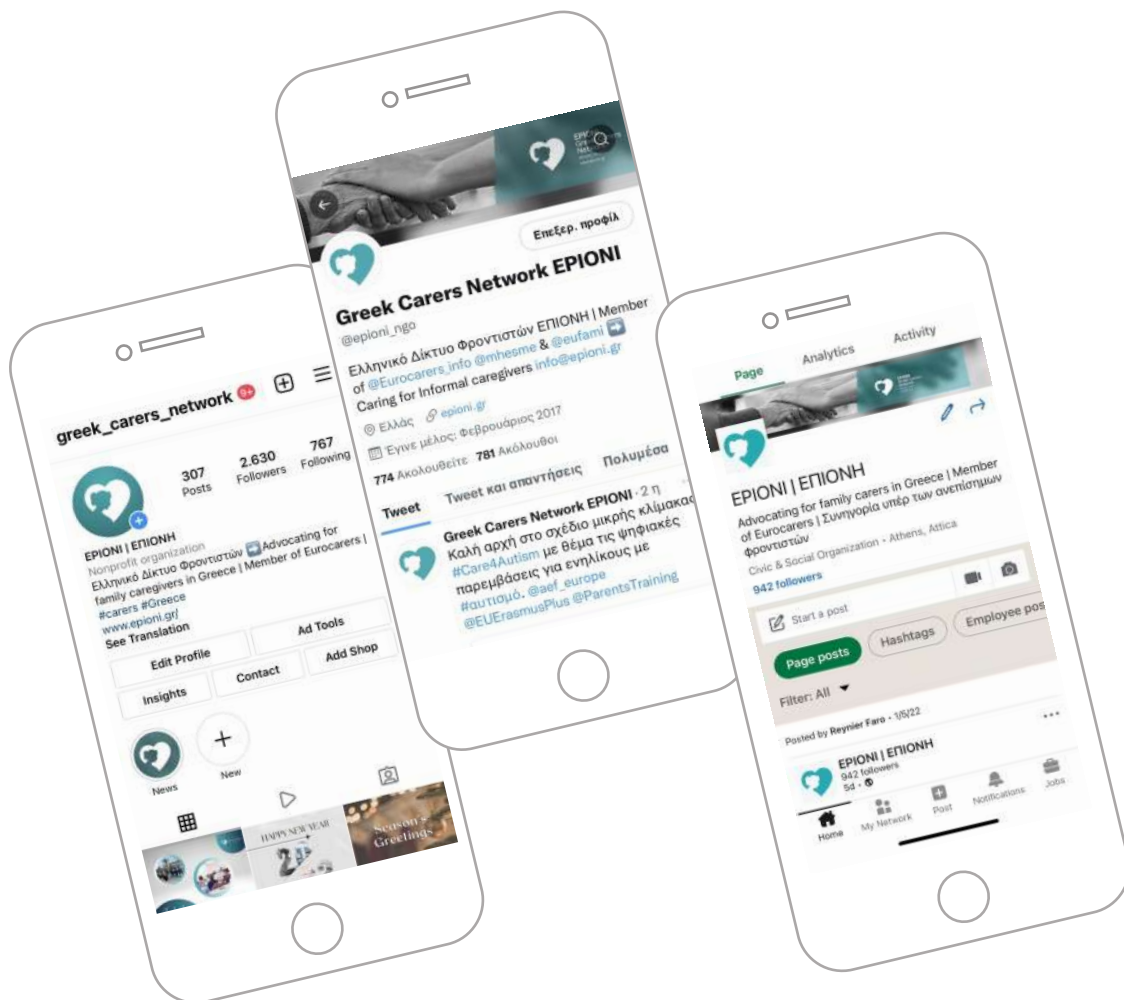
Facebook 3.670 followers (from 2100 in 2020), increase 75 %

LinkedIn 767 followers (from 108 in

2020), increase 610 %

Instagram 1682 followers (from 284 in 2020), increase 492%

Twitter 780 followers (from 641 in 2020), increase 22 %



EU Projects approved in 2021



1) **Care4Autism:** sharing good practices for adults with autism and their family carers



4) **Creativity with MBCT:** Supporting women with physical disabilities and women carers



2) **E-Care4PD:** Exchange of good practices in the field of telemedicine for adults with Parkinson's disease and their family carers in Europe



5) **DIGITALIS:** Empowering family caregivers in the daily use of digital healthcare services.



3) **SUCES:** Support for family carers of adults with mental health problems

Caring for Carers

We would like to thank the following for their cooperation and support:

- 1) members, friends, volunteers and students doing their internships.
- 2) the European Union, the Foundation for State Scholarships (IKY) and the Youth and Lifelong Learning Foundation (I.NE.DI.VI.M.)
- 3) companies: VIANEX, Interamerican, Janssen Greece, Lundbeck, Novartis, Pfizer, Pharmaserv Lilly and Aigeas AMKE.
- 4) the collaborating organisations: European Federation of Neurological Associations (EFNA), Alzheimer Hellas, Alzheimer Chalkida, WFMH, Eurocarers, EUFAMI, EASPD, Mental Health Europe, ALCER, Belgian Brain Council, Spanish Brain Council, Child and Adolescent Centre, Association of Cardiac Officers of the Navy, Coast Guard & Friends, Heart of the Child, EPAPSY, PEPSAEE, EDRA, EKPSY P. Sakelaropoulos, Saronic Nephrological Centre, Greek Patient Association, Panhellenic Federation of People with Multiple Sclerosis, Dynami Zois, Hellenic Psychiatric Association, Wind of Renewal.
- 5) Communication sponsors: www.psychologynow.gr, <https://www.iatronet.gr/>
<http://www.healthdaily.gr/>

www.epioni.gr

Greek Carers Network EPIONI

Viktoros Ougko 15, Athens, PC 104-37

Tel. +30 211 850 7085, +30 6946 00 35 22 (WhatsApp)

Fax.: +30 210 440 6003

info@epioni.gr

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