EPIONI

GREEK CARERS NETWORK

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Greek Carers Network EPIONI
Non-profit association
15 Victoros Ougko St., Metaxourgio, 10437, Athens, Greece
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

https://www.facebook.com/epioni
https://twitter.com/epioni_ngo
https://www.instagram.com/greek_carers_network/
https://www.linkedin.com/company/epioni
https://www.youtube.com/GreekCarersNetworkEPIONI

Want to donate and support our work?

If you want to contribute to the achievement of our goals you can support our work by making a donation.

Alpha Bank - GR650 14010 40104 002002026626 - SWIFT / BIC: CRBAGRAA
National Bank of Greece - GR820 11010 80000 010800189705 - SWIFT/BIC: ETHNGRAA

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

Table of Contents

A few words about EPIONI 4

Message from the President 5

Organisational chart 6

ACTIVITIES 2025

28.04.2025 - 7th Event "Caregivers and Depression" 7

22-24.05.2025 - 3rd Art and Mental Health Festival 8

25.06.2025 - 8th Conference on Heart Disease and the Contribution of Caregivers 11

15.09.2025 - 9th "Caring for Carers" event 12

22.09.2025 - 10th "Caring for Carers" event 13

06.10.2025 - European Carers Day 2025 in Athens 14

03.11.2025 - 8th Event "Caregivers and Depression" 16

05.12.2025 - 2nd Event "Caregivers and Mental Resilience" 17

Updates from EU Projects

I-ACT: Transforming Mental Health Care Through Art Therapy 21

TRUST: An approach through art therapy as a solidarity program for Ukraine war victims 22

Humour meets mental health! – EPIONI joins the Erasmus+ project COMIC RELIEF 23

Greek Carers Network supports promotion of citizen participation and ethical research in the European Cancer Mission with the PERIFORMANCE project 23

The partners of the Healthy Lifestyles for Europe (HL4EU) project met in Aegina from May 21-23.05.2025 25

EPIONI participated in a training session in Cyprus as part of the European project AHA4Autism 27

Strengthening Mental Health Support Across Europe: EPIONI in the MENTAL-CARE Erasmus+ Project 28

EPIONI Facilitates Job Shadowing of Mental Health Professionals from Belgium 30

Final event of the Erasmus+ project EUF 31

Groups

Caring for the Caregiver": A dramatherapy group for those who give care 32

Online Caregivers' Support Group 32

Summer Camp for EPIONI Members 33

Social media presence 35

Acknowledgments 36

About Epioni

"Greek Caregivers Network Epioni" is a non-profit association founded in 2017 that seeks to enhance the recognition of informal care provided by relatives or friends of a person with a chronic condition or disability and to represent and act for caregivers and former caregivers, regardless of age and special needs.

The main objectives according to the statutes include:

1. The collection, exchange and dissemination of information, experience, good practices and innovations.

2. Contributing to the development of policies at national and European level.

Greek Network of Caregivers EPIONI aspires to achieve its goals:

- Acting as a representative of carers and defending their rights.
- Transferring and translating at national and local level the development of European carer-friendly policies
- Supporting cooperation on European projects.

Epioni promotes initiatives aimed at young and adult carers. It encourages education, participation, voluntary actions, mobility and information for informal carers in Greece.

It is aimed at people who, because of their role as carers, need more support and empowerment.

Message from the President

Informal carers—parents, relatives, friends—are an unseen yet fundamental pillar of the care system. They are the people who, often without institutional recognition or adequate support, provide daily hands-on care, emotional support, and stability to their loved ones living with chronic or mental health conditions.

Caring is not an easy task. It comes with increased responsibilities, physical and psychological strain, financial costs, and personal sacrifices. The role of the informal carer requires resilience, consistency, and ongoing effort—often under conditions of loneliness and uncertainty. For this reason, empowering, informing, and supporting carers remains at the core of the mission of the Greek Carers Network EPIONI.

During 2025, EPIONI implemented a wide range of activities at both national and European level. We organised conferences, training and information events, support groups, and awareness-raising actions, aiming to highlight the needs of informal carers and promote mental health. At the same time, we actively participated in European programmes and networks, advancing innovative approaches to education, collaboration, and advocacy for carers' rights.

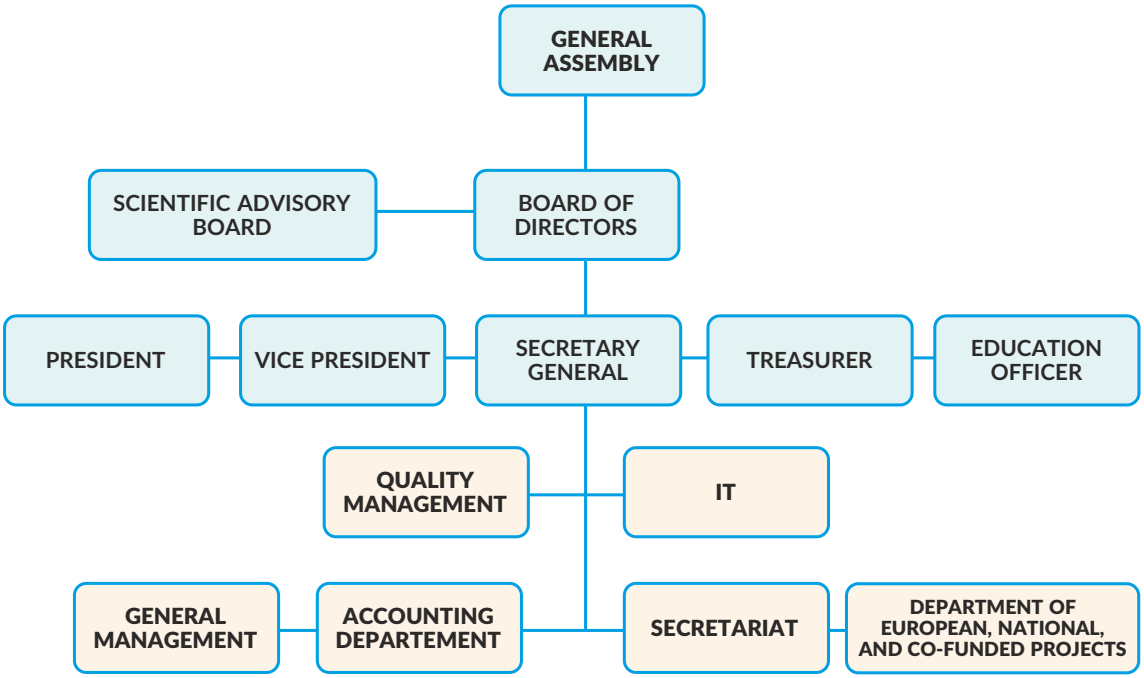
Representatives of EPIONI took part in working meetings and consultations, contributing to the public dialogue on the institutional recognition of informal carers and the improvement of policies affecting them, at both national and European level. Particular emphasis was placed on linking caregiving with mental health, the arts, education, and social inclusion.

I would like to express my warm thanks to the members of EPIONI and their families, our partners, our volunteers, as well as the students and young professionals from Greece, France, Turkey, Ukraine, Iran, and South Sudan who completed their internship with us. Everyone's contribution was crucial to the implementation and quality of our activities.

With optimism and a strong sense of responsibility, we continue into 2026 with the aim for EPIONI's actions to prove even more useful, meaningful, and supportive for an ever-growing number of informal carers. Because care deserves support.

Spyros Zorbas
President of the board
Greek Carers Network EPIONI

Organizational Structure



President: Spyridon Zorbas

Vice President: Stavros Terzakis

Secretary General: Fokion Dimitriadis

Treasurer: Dimitra Stefanopoulou

Education Curator: Maria Spyridaki

Alternate Members: Nikolaos Drosos, Dimitrios Klisiaris, Despoina Gounari

Composition of the Audit Committee

Regular Members:

Ioannis Loukas, Ariadni Ntinou, Efstathia Sardeli

Alternate Members:

Nikolaos Schetakis, Panagiotis Tsonopoulos

Scientific Committee:

Georgios Vallindas, PhD in Law, Advocate General at the Court of Justice of the EU

Orestis Giotakos, Psychiatrist

Suzanna Gregory, Psychiatrist

George Kalergis, Professor of Psychiatry

Dimitris Kontis, Psychiatrist

Georgia Balta, Psychiatrist

Fotis Morogiannis, Psychiatrist

Kalliopi Panagiotopoulou, Medical Doctor

Georgios Tzeferakos, MD, PhD

Ilias Tsoungos, Cardiologist

George Christodoulou, Emeritus Professor of Psychiatry

Konstantinos Psounis, Nephrologist

7th Event “Caregivers and Depression”

28.04.2025 - Metropolitan College, Thessaloniki

An event dedicated to those who care – for empowerment and mental wellbeing

The Greek Carers Network EPIONI successfully held the 7th Conference entitled “Caregivers and Depression” on Monday, 28 April 2025, at 15:00, at Metropolitan College (46 Egnatia Street, 1st floor) in Thessaloniki.

The conference constituted an important initiative aimed at raising awareness, providing information, and empowering family and informal caregivers, highlighting the mental health challenges they face—particularly depression—and the need for accessible support.

The event was held under the auspices of the Hellenic Psychiatric Association and was supported by IASIS at Work, the Society of Social Psychiatry “P. Sakellaropoulos”, and Alzheimer Hellas.

During the conference, mental health professionals presented evidence-based approaches and innovative practices for supporting caregivers. The programme also encouraged dialogue, exchange of experiences, and networking among caregivers, professionals, and civil society organisations.

The strong participation and active engagement of attendees confirmed the importance of continuous initiatives focused on caregivers’ mental wellbeing and the recognition of their essential role in society.

The conference was addressed to family caregivers, health and mental health professionals, volunteers, and all those interested in supporting caregiving and mental wellbeing.

3rd Art and Mental Health Festival

22-24.05.2025 - LaLiBay Resort & Spa, Aegina

Greek Carers Network EPIONI successfully hosted the 3rd Arts and Mental Health Festival on the island of Aegina, from 22 to 24 May 2025, under the auspices of the Region of Attica, the Municipality of Aegina, the Hellenic Psychiatric Association and the Greek Patients Association.
Coinciding with European Mental Health Week, the festival gathered mental health professionals, artists, carers, academics, and community members to explore how artistic expression fosters psychological resilience and social inclusion.
The sponsors were Saronic Ferries and the supermarkets KRITIKOS.
The festival took place alongside the meetings of the projects "Care the Carer", "SharE4Elderly" and "Healthy Lifestyles for Europe." which were co funded by the EU.

Thursday 22 May 2025

The festival opened with welcoming remarks by **Elsa Dimopoulou**, psychologist and representative of the Region of Attica, who reflected on the profound impact of art on self-discovery. **Sofia Chatzina**, Public Health Supervisor of the Municipality of

Aegina, offered her support, followed by **Kadri Soova**, Director of Mental Health Europe, who emphasized the significance of transnational collaboration in mental health.

Maria Metaxaki, mental health counselor and doctor of musical arts, introduced the therapeutic method of receptive music therapy using Music and Imagery (MI), drawing on her work with the Greek National Opera. Her session offered attendees an immersive experience into how sound and imagination can access deep emotional states.

This was followed by **Panagiota Liaramantza**, a nutritionist and dance therapist, who led the interactive workshop "Emotions in Motion." Participants engaged in body-centered movement designed to awaken inner awareness and release

emotional tension through dance.

Later in the afternoon, **Barbara Kondilis**, mental health counselor and educator, conducted a hybrid workshop on street art and mindfulness. Through guided graffiti and reflection, she connected artistic freedom to grounding and mental presence.

Friday 23 May 2025

The second day began with greetings from EPIONI's **Fokion Dimitriadis**, followed by the vice mayor of Sports of Aegina Mr **Vasilios Zampelis**.

Veronika Všetíčková, Head of EU Affairs at ELPA (European Liver Patients' Association), also addressed the audience, highlighting the importance of integrating liver health advocacy into broader mental health efforts

Alina Chebes, policy advisor from EuropeActive, presented the project Healthy Lifestyles for Europe (HL4EU), advocating cross-sectoral partnerships to promote physical activity and mental wellness. **Iulia Halangescu** from the European Network for Holistic Integration introduced the project Care the Carer, which focuses on empowering family caregivers and raising awareness to combat stigma.

Representatives from the Medical University of Łódź, including Professor **Anna Lipert** and project manager **Anna Krzyżańska-Chybowska**, shared examples of best practices in public health interventions, preventive medicine, and pedagogical strategies to support mental and physical wellbeing.

Dr. **Angeliki Tsapanou**, clinical neuropsychologist and associate professor at the University of Patras, explored psychosocial interventions in dementia care, emphasizing how art facilitates memory retrieval and emotional connectivity for patients.

In a more symbolic presentation, **Dimitra Stefanopoulou** of EUFAMI analyzed the artwork of Edvard Munch to illustrate the links between emotional suffering and artistic legacy. **Nina Sønderberg**, psychotherapist and co-founder of Nordic Wellbeing Academy, followed with a presentation on guided creativity for self-love and therapeutic co-creation in emotion-focused therapy.

Later, **Maria Eliades** and **Anna Bechraki** from PEPSAEE described the first year of operation at the "En-Techni Psyhi" Day Centre, showcasing the restorative function of art in structured psychosocial rehabilitation. Their presentation was followed by **Filippa Drivala** and **Myrto Ntova**, who presented the work of the Heliotropio Day Centre in Athens and its collaborative ceramic therapy projects, including contributions from potter **Vasileios Goumas** and sculptor **Evangelos Karkani**s.

In parallel, the psychologist **Dimitris Begioglou** conducted a powerful Playback Theatre workshop, transforming personal stories into collective theatrical expression through improvisation. Participants also joined the PEPSAEE Theatre Group for a physical theatre workshop titled "Meet Me on Stage," designed to bridge individual self-expression and group cohesion.

An art therapy session titled "The Paintings Change" was led by **Despina Papaioannou** and **Aggeliki Tsiaxiri** from the Society for Social Psychiatry P. Sakelaropoulos, inviting participants to explore transformation through imagery.

Georgia Achilleopoulou, a vocal coach and PhD candidate, then guided an experiential session on breathing and physiovocal integration, helping participants connect

voice, breath, and emotional release.

The day closed with a sunset concert performed by the Estoudiantina of Aegina, conducted by Alexandros Spitzing. This multisensory experience blended traditional melodies and community connection, leaving attendees with a sense of harmony and renewal.

Saturday 24 May 2025

Saturday's sessions began with opening messages from Mrs **Kadri Soova** from Mental Health Europe, Mr **Lars Munter** from the Nordic Wellbeing Academy, Dr. **Valter Fonseca** of WHO office in Greece, and **Fokion Dimitriadis** of EPIONI, affirming a shared commitment to dignity and equity in mental health policy.

Psychologist **Eftychia Nikolopoulou** and social worker **Eleni Alexandridi** presented the work of the Thalpos Mental Health Day Centre and the integration of arts therapies in structured clinical settings. This was followed by **Panagiota Mylona**, nurse at Alzheimer Athens, who explored how painting and music evoke memories and connection in people with dementia.

Maria Papagianni and **Eirini Vamvakari,** representing the same organization, discussed psychosocial interventions through theatrical expression, aimed at individuals with dementia and their caregivers.

Aphroditi Pantagoutsou and **Nancy Antoniadou** delivered a joint presentation on the current landscape of art psychotherapy and facilitated an interactive art session titled "Paint Your Name," helping participants engage with self-perception through visual media.

Christiana Adamopoulou, **Konstantina Kostastari**, and **Eleni Tsolka** then led a group music therapy workshop using voice, rhythm, and RoMI methods, followed by a musical interlude featuring **Manolis Skoulas** and **Eleni Papaki** performing Greek and international ballads.

In the afternoon, photojournalist Mrs **Maro Kouri** facilitated a powerful photography workshop called "The Healing Click of the Heart," inspiring participants to remain present through the lens of artistic vision.

Dr. **Konstantina Kontopoulou** presented her personal photo exhibition, Dementia Diaries, offering a poignant visual narrative that intertwines her experience as an informal caregiver with broader themes of memory, identity, and emotional connection.

The theme of education and global health continued with **Theodora Kokkinou** and Professor **Evanthia Sakellari,** who presented the eMAMA project—an EU initiative aimed at developing postgraduate training on maternal mental health in sub-Saharan Africa.

Next, **Nadia Kavoulakou** and **Ermioni Dova** introduced the therapeutic clowning method "Angel Clown," which they elaborated upon both in a lecture and a hands-on workshop. They demonstrated how clowning techniques can build emotional bridges and resilience in vulnerable populations.

In a deeply moving moment of the day, psychotherapist **Dionysia Giannopoulou** presented her autobiographical book "Blooming: A Psychotherapist's Journey from Cancer to Healing", recounting her personal path through illness, vulnerability, and recovery, where art played a central role in her transformation.

The festival concluded with an evocative talk by psychiatrist and dramatherapist **Stelios Krasanakis** on cultural representations of inclusion, urging communities to embrace diversity through the arts.

8th Conference on Heart Disease and the Contribution of Caregivers

25.06.2025 - ESIEA Hall

EPIONI, in collaboration with the associations “The Heart of the Child,” “Skitali,” and the “Union of Cardiac Patients of Hellenic Navy – Coast Guard Officers and Friends,” successfully organized the 8th Conference on Tuesday, June 25, 2025, at the ESIEA Hall, under the theme: “Supporting Individuals with Heart Conditions and the Contribution of Their Caregivers.”

The event was held under the auspices of the Region of Attica, the Municipality of Athens, and the Global Heart Hub.

The conference was greeted by:

Anna Ntina, Vice President of the “Skytali” Association, who emphasized the need for collaboration between associations and the state in supporting patients with chronic illnesses.

Panagiota Manou, Head of the Directorate for Disability Policies, who highlighted the importance of integrating caregiving into the disability policy agenda.

Elena Kountoura, Member of the European Parliament, who stressed the need for equal access to healthcare and continued support for caregivers at the European level.

Joanna Ten-Kate, representative of the Global Heart Hub, who presented good practices from across Europe regarding patient empowerment.

Athina Koltsidopoulou, from the association “The Child’s Heart,” who spoke about the challenges faced by parents of children with heart conditions.

Spyridon Zorbas, Chair of the Board of EPIONI, who addressed the importance of recognizing the role of informal caregivers and strengthening support networks.

The conference featured speeches by:

Ignatios Oikonomidis, Professor of Cardiology at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA), who spoke about the modern management of cardiometabolic patients and new therapeutic options.

Konstantinos Kyriazopoulos, Head of the Heart Attack Unit at the Naval Hospital of Athens, who addressed non-pharmacological interventions and the crucial role of caregivers in patient recovery.

Antonios Psaroudakis, Retired Navy Captain, who shared his personal experience as a heart patient, emphasizing the importance of dignity and mental strength.

Georgios Zervas, Physician – Researcher at NKUA, who explained the role of clinical studies and encouraged patients to stay informed and participate.

Vasiliki Varela & Maria Vlachopoulou, Psychologists from NKUA, who presented the psychological impact of hereditary heart diseases and the support needs of patients and their families.

The conference concluded with an open discussion with the audience, reinforcing the message that cardiac care requires an interdisciplinary and human-centered approach.

The event was supported by Bodossaki Lectures on Demand (BLOD), the online lecture library (blod.gr) of the Bodossaki Foundation.

We warmly thank our communication sponsors: Blod.gr – iatronet.gr – psychologynow\.gr – healthdaily.gr

9th “Caring for Carers” event

15.09.2025 - Metropolitan College, Thessaloniki

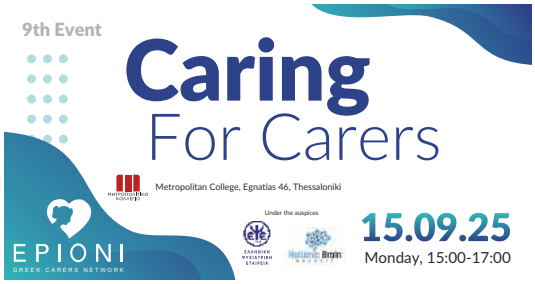
On 15 September 2025, EPIONI organized an event entitled “Caring for Carers” at Metropolitan College, 46 Egnatia Str., 1st floor, Thessaloniki. The event also took place online.

The event was held under the auspices of the Hellenic Psychiatric Association and the Hellenic Brain Council, in collaboration with the Society of Social Psychiatry “P. Sakellaropoulos”, the Panhellenic Federation of Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders, the Cancer Patient Guidance Center (K3), and IASIS NGO – Iasis@Work.

Official greetings were delivered by MEP Elena Kountoura, former MEP and psychiatrist Stelios Kympouropoulos, and Fokion Dimitriadis, Secretary General of EPIONI.

Speakers included Aggeliki Yantselidou, Psychologist, MSc, who spoke on “The Power of Shared Experience: Peer Support in Caring for Caregivers”; Maria Toumpalidou, Psychologist – Systemic Psychotherapist, who presented the “Services of the Caregivers’ Department of Alzheimer Hellas” and “Mental Resilience in the Concept of Care”; Ioanna Saltsidou, Psychologist, IASIS NGO – Iasis@Work, who addressed “Managing and Addressing the Needs of Caregivers of People with Schizophrenia”;

Katerina Sameli, Psychologist (EGO IDEAL), who discussed “Chronic Illness as a Factor in the Emergence of Emotional Disorders in Patients and Caregivers”; Vassilios Makrygiannis, Psychiatrist, who spoke on “The Social Isolation of Informal Caregivers”; Vaia Barba, MPA, MA, Social Worker, Department of Social Policy, Municipality of N. Zichni, who presented “Dementia Through the Eyes of Children: When the Whole Family Cares”; and Maria Engiazarova, Psychologist – Psychotherapist, who spoke on “The Contribution of Art and Narrative Therapy in Dementia Prevention”.



Media sponsors of the conference were PsychologyNow.gr and Iatronet.gr, while sponsors included the Saronikos Nephrology Center and Pharmaserve Lilly.

10th “Caring for Carers” event

22.09.2025 - French Institute of Greece

The 10th conference “Caring for Carers” was successfully held on Monday, 22 September 2025, at the French Institute of Greece. The event, also broadcast online, was dedicated to family carers who provide daily support to people living with chronic illness or disability.

The conference opened with welcome remarks by **Elena Kountoura**, Member of the European Parliament and **Elsa Dimopoulou**, Psychologist, representing the Region of Attica,

A series of distinguished experts and health professionals then delivered presentations. **Areti Efthymiou**, PhD, President of the Hellenic Scientific Association for Health Literacy, addressed the importance of health literacy among carers of people with dementia. **Christos Prapas** from the University of West Attica presented public and community health interventions aimed at empowering carers.

Katialena Sourvinou, Psychologist at the Social Psychiatry Association P. Sakellaropoulos, spoke about psychological support for relatives caring for cancer patients. This was followed by **Ourania Liarmakopoulou**, Music Therapist, and Psychiatrist Christos Gikas from Sonora,

who highlighted the contribution of music therapy in supporting carers.

The conference concluded with the presentation of **Christina Dalla**, Professor of Pharmacology at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and President of the Hellenic Brain Council, who discussed depression among patients and carers, with a focus on gender differences. An open discussion with participants followed.

The event was held under the auspices of the Region of Attica, the Hellenic Psychiatric Association, and the Hellenic Brain Council, with the collaboration of numerous scientific and social organizations.

Sponsors of the conference were Pharmaserve Lilly and the Saronic Nephrology Center, while media partners included psychologynow.gr, iatronet.gr, healthdaily.gr, and thedailyhealth.gr.

Through this conference, EPIONI once again underlined that behind every patient there is a person offering daily love, dedication, and continuous care.

European Carers Day 2025 in Athens

06.10.2025 - Office of the European Parliament in Greece

On Monday, 6 October 2025, at 14:30, an event marking European Carers Day took place at the Office of the European Parliament in Greece, in Athens, as well as online.

This year's theme highlighted the contribution of migrant care workers, on whom millions of families across Europe rely every day.

Despite their essential role, migrant carers often remain "invisible", without sufficient legal protection, social recognition, or decent working conditions.

Under the motto "Let's make migrant care visible, respected and protected", this year's campaign called on public authorities and society to acknowledge their contribution, invest in quality and accessible long-term care services, and develop inclusion policies that ensure decent work and social rights for all.

The event opened with greetings from institutional representatives.

Speakers included Mr. Konstantinos Tsoutsoplidis, Head of the European Parliament Office in Greece, Ms. Elena Kountoura, Member of the European Parliament, and Mr. Stelios Kympouropoulos, psychiatrist and former Member of the European Parliament.

Further remarks were made by Ms. Panagiota Manou, Head of the Directorate for Disability Policies at the General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and Poverty Alleviation of the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family, and Ms. Elsa Dimopoulou, Psychologist–Psychotherapist, Head of the Psychological Department in

the Office of the Deputy Regional Governor for Health of the Region of Attica.

In the main part of the conference, Dr. Menelaos Theodoroulakis, PhD in Social Policy, President of PEPSAEE and the ARGO Federation, presented the challenges and prospects of psychiatric reform in Greece.

Next, psychiatrist Dr. Stella Stathoulopoulou spoke about autism in later life, highlighting challenges and opportunities for innovative care practices.

Dr. Elizabeth Mestheneos, sociologist and researcher with international academic experience, analyzed employment policies, wage inequalities, and the role of migrants in the care sector, both in Greece and across the EU.

Then, Ms. Anastasia (Nansia) Gatopoulou, Advisor at the WHO Office in Athens, discussed the importance of collaboration with informal carers to improve the quality of mental health care.

Mr. Christos Prapas, Lecturer at the University of West Attica, presented the collaboration between informal carers and health professionals to promote community health.

Ms. Dimitra Karteri, Social Worker and Scientific Director of a Supported Apartment of PESOPSY, and Ms. Yro Litsaki, Psychologist at the PESOPSY Day Centre, shared a practical and emotional perspective on carers' support groups through real-life experiences.

Finally, Ms. **Alexandra Katsouli**, General Secretary of the NGO EREISMA, Psychologist and Criminologist (Msc), discussed how caregiving can act as a factor of social cohesion, giving a more human dimension to the discussion.

The event was held under the auspices of the European Parliament Office in Greece, the Region of Attica, the Hellenic Psychiatric Association, and the European Federation Eurocarers.

Media sponsors included Daily Pharma News, Psychology Now, and Iatronet.

The Greek Carers Network EPIONI warmly thanks the First Panhellenic Association of Families for Mental Health (PESOPSY) for their collaboration in organizing the event, as well as all speakers and participants for their valuable contributions to its success.

8th Event “Caregivers and Depression”

03.11.2025 - French Institute of Greece

The Greek Carers Network EPIONI, continuing its mission to inform and empower caregivers of people with chronic illnesses or disabilities, is organizing the 8th event on “Caregivers and Depression” on Monday, November 3, 2025, at 15:00, at the French Institute of Greece (2nd floor, Sina 31, Athens). The event will take place in person and will also be broadcast online via the Zoom platform. The event is under the auspices of the Region of Attica, the Hellenic Psychiatric Association, and the Hellenic Brain Council, and is organized in collaboration with mental health organizations.

Event Programme

Georgios Christodoulou, Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry, President of the European Union of Professors Emeriti

Maria Karamitsopoulou, Office for Civil Society, City of Athens

Speakers

Clinical Depression: Diagnosis, Causes & Treatment. **Taulant Jupe,** MD, PhDc, Psychiatrist, Consultant B, Multidisciplinary Mental Health Unit of Attica

Depression within the Integrated Care Framework – The Experience from the “FRONTIZO” Program of the City of Athens. Dr. **Th. A. Vontetsianos**, MD, PhD, President, Hellenic Society for Innovation in Healthy and Active Ageing

Cognitive Behavioral Psychotherapy and Rehabilitation for Depression among Caregivers of People with Chronic or Mental Health Conditions. Dr. **Stavroula Rakitzi**, Clinical Psychologist

The Depressive Aspect of Caregiving. **Kelli Panayiotopoulou**, Medical Doctor

Taking the Right Steps to Address Caregivers’ Depression. **Elsa Dimopoulou**, Psychologist – Psychotherapist, Region of Attica

Support for Caregivers of People with Depression. **Katerina Aranitou**, Clinical Psychologist, 414 Military Hospital of Special Diseases

2nd Event "Caregivers and Mental Resilience"

05.12.2025 - French Institute of Greece

Mental resilience is a fundamental factor for family caregivers of people living with chronic illness or disability. The caregiving role entails continuous emotional, practical, and social demands, profoundly affecting the caregiver's daily life. Strengthening resilience through information, psychoeducation, and supportive networks helps reduce stress, prevent burnout, and improve the quality of life for both caregiver and care recipient.

With this in mind, EPIONI organised the 2nd event "Caregivers and Mental Resilience", highlighting scientific approaches, good practices, and experiential perspectives that empower caregiving by first supporting the caregiver.

The event was held under the auspices of the Region of Attica, the Hellenic Psychiatric Association, and the Hellenic Brain Council, with free admission and the option to participate via Zoom.

The sponsors of the event were Boehringer Ingelheim, Vianex, and the Saronikos Nephrology Center, while the media sponsors were Iatronet, Health Daily, Daily Health, and Psychology Now.

Key Points from the Presentations

Enhancing Neuroplasticity for Mental Resilience. **Christina Dalla**, Professor of Pharmacology, Medical School, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Prof. Dalla presented the role of neuroplasticity and cognitive flexibility in coping with stress. Learning, social interaction, art, physical activity, quality sleep, and mindfulness practices all enhance the brain's adaptive capacity, forming the foundation of mental resilience.

Training Informal Caregivers by Professional Nurses. **Ioannis Anastasiou,** Nurse – Co-founder of Instahealth

The presentation emphasised that educating caregivers is a crucial empowerment tool. Providing practical skills, psychological support, and structured guidance reduces stress, boosts confidence, and improves the quality of care provided to the patient.

Psychosocial Adjustment in Chronic Kidney Disease. **Eirini Zormpa**, Deputy Head, Hemodialysis & Peritoneal Dialysis Unit, Attikon University Hospital

Ms. Zormpa highlighted the multifaceted challenges faced by individuals with chronic kidney disease (CKD) and their families—psychological strain, lifestyle restrictions, economic burden, and social limitations. Particular emphasis was placed on family support, caregiver education, active participation in treatment, and strengthening caregiver resilience.

Preventing Somatization – Dance Movement Psychotherapy. **Anda Paizi,** Dance Therapist – Psychotherapist

Ms. Paizi presented the frequent occurrence of somatic symptoms among caregivers due to chronic stress. Understanding the mind–body connection, practicing mindful breathing, and engaging in dance movement psychotherapy were shown to support stress regulation and enhance resilience.

Care and Self-Care: Two Interconnected Circles. **Artemis Aletra**, Social Worker – Psychotherapist

Ms. Aletra described caregiving and self-care as two interrelated circles that continuously influence each other. The quality of caregiving depends directly on the caregiver's ability to care for themselves—an essential prerequisite rather than a luxury.

Through a practical therapeutic example, she illustrated how a small act of self-regulation—a deep breath, relaxing the shoulders, reconnecting with the body—can immediately improve the caregiver–care recipient relationship:

"When I breathe, the relationship breathes."

She also referred to common challenges (overwork culture, guilt, systemic pressures) and simple strategies for strengthening resilience, such as micro-breaks, boundary-setting rituals, peer support, and self-kindness. The overlap of the two circles creates a space of balance that reduces burnout and empowers the caregiver.

When Caregiving Becomes Identity. **Katerina Sameli**, Health Psychologist – Systemic Psychotherapist

Ms. Sameli highlighted how long-term caregiving can gradually absorb the individual and become part of their identity, often leading to guilt, burnout, and neglect of personal needs. She stressed the importance of boundaries, support, and self-care, reminding participants that:

"A caregiver is much more than their role."

The Cycles of Care – A Systemic Perspective. **Kyriaki Fotiadou**, Psychologist MSc – Systemic Psychotherapist

Ms. Fotiadou presented caregiving as a process embedded in a broader relational system. Mental resilience arises through family and social support, flexible role distribution, open communication, and relational connection. The caregiver is also part of the "cycle of care" and deserves support.

Conclusion

The event underscored that mental resilience is essential for sustainable caregiving. Empowering caregivers through education, support, self-regulation, and strong systemic connections contributes to more humane, effective, and balanced care.

The event was supported by Bodossaki Lectures on Demand – BLOD, where the related material will be published.

I-ACT: Transforming Mental Health Care Through Art Therapy

The Greek Carers Network EPIONI proudly participated in the I-ACT (Innovating Art Community Therapies) Erasmus+ small scale project, a ground-breaking 16-month European initiative that concluded in June 2025. This transformative collaboration brought together three organizations to revolutionize mental health care through innovative art therapy approaches.

From February 2024 to June 2025, EPIONI worked alongside the Centre Psychiatrique Saint-Bernard in Belgium and the Danish Committee for Health Education. This partnership combined our expertise in caregiver support with clinical experience and health education knowledge, creating a powerful synergy for developing art therapy innovations.

The project began with a memorable kick-off meeting in Manage, Belgium on March 8, 2024, where we established the foundation for our collaboration. Throughout the 16 months, we maintained excellent communication through regular monthly meetings, WhatsApp consultations, and shared resources that enabled seamless cooperation despite geographical distances.

We gained valuable expertise in organizing structured art therapy programs and learned innovative approaches to involving civil society in mental health care. Our partnership enriched our understanding of different cultural approaches to mental health support, expanding our toolkit while developing more effective methods for reducing stigma through artistic expression.

The collaboration produced a comprehensive multilingual guide on developing art therapy festivals and culminated in the successful international art therapy festival at the Centre Psychiatrique Saint-Bernard which took place April 8th 2025, demonstrating the practical application of our shared learnings.

As we move forward, we remain committed to using these valuable resources to support caregivers and individuals with mental health challenges across Greece, while continuing to build bridges with our European partners in the spirit of solidarity and shared purpose.

The I-ACT project was co-funded by the European Union through the Erasmus+ Adult Education Programme, demonstrating the power of European collaboration in addressing mental health challenges.

TRUST: An approach through art therapy as a solidarity program for Ukraine war victims.

TRUST: An Innovative Art Therapy Approach to Support War Victims in Ukraine

TRUST is an Erasmus+ KA220 project that introduces an innovative art therapy approach, serving as a solidarity program to support the victims of the war in Ukraine.

The project is coordinated by the psychiatric hospital Centre Neuro Psychiatrique Saint-Martin in Belgium, in partnership with the "Yuri Kondratyuk Poltava Polytechnic" National University in Ukraine, the Associação Europlural Project in Portugal, the Lekama Foundation in Luxembourg, the Fondazione Internazionale Don Luigi Di Liegro in Italy, and our association in Greece.

Objectives

Main Objective: To enhance the psychological and physical well-being of war victims in Ukraine, providing support for managing stress and trauma related to the conflict.

To highlight the life stories and artistic expressions of Ukrainians as powerful

testimonies of the human impact of war, promoting EU values of peace and justice.

To cultivate skills for organizing artistic and cultural events within and beyond hospitals, contributing to the destigmatization of mental health.

To provide knowledge about art therapy to mental health professionals, educators, artists, and the general public.

To foster collaboration between mental health networks, artists, cultural institutions, and civil society.

To promote art therapy as a tool for social inclusion, self-esteem enhancement, and overall well-being.

To emphasize the transformative power of art in healing and communication, with a focus on war victims in Ukraine.

To disseminate the EU values of solidarity and peace.

Key Results

Art Therapy: A European Approach for War Victims

Development of a European educational e-book to promote art therapy for war victims, aligned with EU values.

Provision of theoretical and practical training to strengthen the skills of mental health professionals, educators, artists, and family members of victims.

Culturally Sensitive Educational Program for Adults

Creation of educational tools for art therapy aimed at psychological recovery for war victims and empowerment for trainers.

Launch of a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) integrating art as a transformative medium for mental health improvement.

Art Peace: A Tribute to Ukraine

Showcasing personal stories and artistic works of Ukrainians to raise public awareness about the impact of conflicts.

Building connections between mental health centers, artists, cultural institutions, and educators to promote collaboration.

Organizing artistic events to combat mental health stigma while fostering empathy and solidarity.

This project, centered on art and human connection, provides healing opportunities and empowerment for war victims and their families.

Humour meets mental health! – EPIONI joins the Erasmus+ project COMIC RELIEF

The Greek Carers Network EPIONI is a partner in the Erasmus+ project "COMIC RELIEF – Because Mental Health is No Laughing Matter" (ref. no. 2024-2-FR02-KA220-YOU-000272403). The project started in January 2025 and ends in January 2027.

The project leader is the non-profit organization ÉLAN INTERCULTUREL from Paris, France, and the partner organizations are two organizations from Dublin, Ireland – the social enterprise ARTETEKA LIMITED and the non-profit organization Redial Partnership CLG, as well as two partners from Palermo, Italy – the non-profit organization Associazione di Promozione Sociale Per Esempio ONLUS and the medium-sized enterprise Promimpresa Società Benefit S.R.L. Another partner is the ICEP s.r.o. from Bratislava, Slovakia.

The general objective of the project is: To improve competences of professionals working with youth experiencing mental health issues by creating tailored innovative digital learning material including methodologies based on humour and guidelines on how to trigger synergies with other sectors supporting vulnerable youth.

The specific objectives are:

To increase understanding of educators on how socio-economic barriers and obstacles influence stress in youth both in the non-formal education sector and when looking for jobs.

To produce EU accessible tools to identify and tackle stress in youth through a humour-based methodology. To enhance collaboration between the formal and non-formal education sectors and the wider community (families and friends) to provide better support to stress management.

The tangible results of the project are three:

1st Result: Comic Relief: Humour-based Methodologies in Educational Settings for a Better Mental Health.

2nd Result: Comic Relief: Handbook for Youth Workers (Educators, care givers, social workers) based on humour.

3rd Result: Guidelines for synergic collaboration on stress management through humour therapy.

This project is therefore a pioneering action in Europe and looks at humour therapy as a tool to promote inclusion and manage mental health in young people. The project is also innovative because it encompasses different environments (formal and non-formal education, personal spheres) of young people and strives to build a synergic approach for supporting young people with socioeconomic barriers.

Project partners

ELAN INTERCULTUREL:
www.elaninterculturel.com

ARTETEKA LIMITED:
https://arteteka.com/

Associazione di Promozione Sociale Per Esempio ONLUS:
www.peresempionlus.org

Redial Partnership CLG:
https://www.redialpartnership.org/

Promimpresa Società Benefit S.R.L.:
www.promimpresa.it

Greek Carers Network EPIONI:
www.epioni.gr

Icep – Institute of European Certification of Personnel:
https://www.iceponline.com/

Greek Carers Network supports promotion of citizen participation and ethical research in the European Cancer Mission with the PERIFORMANCE project.

EPIONI announces participation in PERIFORMANCE, a European project that seeks to transform the way society engages in cancer research. It is coordinated by the Biobanking and BioMolecular resources Research Infrastructure – European Research Infrastructure Consortium (BBMRI-ERIC) in partnership with 12 institutions from nine different countries.

Ethics from the start

PERIFORMANCE aims to ensure that cancer research and developments, in line with technological advances such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the European Health Data Space (EHDS), are applied in an ethical, equitable and transparent manner. Achieved through targeted stakeholder engagement, it will strengthen public trust and ensure fair changes, solutions and developments in the fight against cancer.

The EU Cancer Mission, together with the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, exist to improve the lives of millions of people through prevention, early diagnosis, new treatments and better quality of life. Success depends on real representation of different populations and incorporating the voices of patients, professionals and citizens in research.

PERIFORMANCE
Science with Society for Mission Cancer.

PERIFORMANCE: An innovative project to overcome these challenges

PERIFORMANCE stands for Public Engagement in Research Infrastructures for Mission Cancer: managing complexity of emerging technologies. The project addresses the ethical, legal, and societal implications (ELSI) in biobanking and cancer research.

The priorities are to:

– Identify and disseminate good practices of participation, transparency and governance, with a leading role for biobanks as infrastructures connecting research and citizenship.

– Analyse the impact of AI and EHDS on trust and social engagement in research.

– Fund local participatory pilot projects through open calls for proposals.

– Provide training and workshops to ensure inclusive, adapted and sustainable approaches.

PERIFORMANCE is another step towards

advancing cancer research not only in scientific results but also in terms of social trust, equity and citizen participation, emphasises . The three-year project brings together universities, hospitals, biobanks, policy makers and patient associations, among others, to create a European reference framework to ensure inclusive, ethical and needs-based research that improves prevention, diagnosis, treatment and quality of life for people with cancer.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

The partners of the Healthy Lifestyles for Europe (HL4EU) project met in Aegina from May 21-23.05.2025

From May 21 to 23, the partners of the Erasmus Sport HL4EU project met for an in-person meeting on the beautiful island of Aegina. The meeting took place within the framework of the 3rd Art and Mental Health Festival. It was held during the European Mental Health Week, and the beautiful setting helped inspire new ideas for our mission: promoting healthier lifestyles through cross-sectoral collaboration.

On the first day, we reviewed the project's achievements over the past 18 months. A significant milestone was the launch of the Cross-Sectoral Platform of Good Practices. Our partner EIEIM presented a comprehensive analysis of the good practices submitted through a literature review over the last six months. After a thorough data-cleaning process, 78 out of more than 100 submissions were included. This data revealed which sectors are most active in collaborating to promote healthy lifestyles, as well as the types of innovations taking place across Europe.

This analysis provided valuable insights and inspired the partners to continue exploring other promising practices.

Our organization also shared an update on the ongoing Call for Exchange of Good Practices. So far, we have received several submissions from organizations across Europe. These include projects focused on:

- Active cities and sustainable school transport

- Healthy youth development
- Urban planning that supports mobility and well-being
- Nutrition-focused research

While encouraged by the quality of the submissions, we also discussed ways to increase participation.

We were especially inspired by an external presentation about Greece Race for the Cure, a dynamic initiative that gathers over 50,000 participants annually to raise awareness and support the fight against breast cancer through a running event in our country.

Next, our partner IGOTCo led a session on organizing virtual focus groups. These sessions will help us better understand how cross-sectoral initiatives work in practice — what drives success and which challenges need to be addressed.

ENOS followed with a presentation on shaping policy recommendations and setting clear impact objectives for the project.

We received updates from the Project Quality Team (POLIS & ENOS) and from the EuropeActive project coordinator regarding project management and finances.

To conclude the day, we participated in festival workshops that provided valuable insights on how various forms of art can support self-awareness and mental well-being.

Presenting Our Project at the Festival

On the second day, Alina Chebes from the EuropeActive federation presented the Healthy Lifestyles for Europe project at the 3rd Art and Mental Health Festival. The audience included stakeholders from municipalities, health and art sectors, universities, and medical associations. We shared our goals and the lessons learned so far, highlighting the important role of physical activity in mental health.

We left Aegina full of new ideas, motivation, and renewed spirit. We are grateful to all partners for their dedication and participation, as well as to the inspiring speakers and contributors of the festival. Together, we are ready to continue building strong cross-sectoral collaborations that support healthier, more active lives across Europe!

Call for Submission of Good Practices

We invite organizations, institutions, and bodies from Greece and other European countries to participate in our initiative by submitting their good practices for promoting a healthy lifestyle through the Cross-Sectoral Platform of Good Practices.

We are looking for innovative actions and programs that:

promote cross-sectoral collaboration for health and well-being

encourage physical activity and active citizen participation

upport mental health through creative approaches

develop sustainable solutions for healthier communities

implement policies and practices that enhance quality of life

Your participation will contribute to the creation of a pan-European network of knowledge and experience that will inspire and guide future initiatives for promoting healthy lifestyles across Europe.

Share your experience and become part of this important European effort for a healthier and more active way of life!

EPIONI participated in a training session in Cyprus as part of the European project AHA4Autism

On May 22nd and 23rd, our colleagues Dimitra Christopoulou and Marios Boukakegias participated in the international meeting of the European project AHA4 Autism in Limassol, Cyprus, together with partners from Italy, Spain, and Cyprus.

Exchange of Good Practices for Active and Healthy Ageing

The AHA4Autism project focuses on the exchange of good practices for Active and Healthy Ageing of adults with Autism and their caregivers. As individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders live longer, they face unique challenges in the ageing process that require a specialized approach and tailored support.

Our collaboration aims to create a network of knowledge and experience that will facilitate the development of innovative solutions for:

- Promoting autonomy and independence
- Maintaining physical and mental health
- Enhancing social participation
- Supporting families and caregivers
- Presentation of Good Practices from Greece

During the meeting, good practices from Europe and the United States were presented:

Marios and Dimitra presented the good practice Autism Friendly Initiative of the Boston Medical Center, which is an innovative approach to creating autism-friendly environments in the healthcare sector. The initiative includes staff training to understand the needs of individuals with autism, adaptation of physical spaces to reduce sensory stimuli, and the development of personalized care protocols that take into account the unique needs of each individual.

As a project partner from Greece, we are contributing to the development of tools and training that will improve the quality of life for individuals with autism and their families across Europe.

We would especially like to thank our colleagues from Cyprus, Italy, and the coordinator from Spain for the excellent collaboration!

The AHA4Autism project is implemented within the framework of the #ErasmusPlus program, supported by the Agencia Nacional SEPIE and co-funded by the European Union. For more information, visit: www.aha4autism.eu

Strengthening Mental Health Support Across Europe: EPIONI in the MENTAL-CARE Erasmus+ Project

Across Europe, millions of adults face mental health challenges—often in silence. These individuals are frequently supported by family members who take on the demanding role of caregiver, often without training, recognition, or sufficient support. Family caregivers are essential to the mental health care system, yet they frequently experience emotional strain, isolation, and burnout. Addressing these challenges is urgent and necessary.

At EPIONI, we are very glad to be part of the European Erasmus+ project MENTAL-CARE, alongside committed partners from Finland, Spain, Croatia, and Belgium. This collaborative initiative aims to enhance support, foster cooperation, and promote inclusive practices in mental health care across Europe.

Project Objectives

The MENTAL-CARE project seeks to:

Improve support systems for adults living with mental health conditions and their family caregivers throughout Europe.

Foster collaboration and knowledge exchange between professionals, organizations, and stakeholders in the mental health field.

Promote effective communication and cooperation among mental health users, healthcare professionals, and family members.

Raise awareness and understanding of mental health issues to help reduce stigma and promote inclusion.

What Are We Doing?

To achieve these goals, the project includes the following key activities:

Good Practices Guide with video content: “Supporting Adults with Mental Health Conditions and Their Family Caregivers in Europe”, showcasing successful approaches and real-life examples from across Europe.

Three-Day Learning Activity (20–22 February 2025) at the University Hospital

Vrapče in Croatia, including study visits and interactive workshops.

Learning Activity in Stockholm, Sweden (6-7 June 2025), in partnership with EUFAMI, focusing on effective cooperation and communication among mental health users, professionals, and family members.

Four Awareness Events during European Mental Health Week 2026, to engage the public, reduce stigma, and promote better understanding.

Expected Results

Through these activities, we expect to achieve:

Greater understanding and dissemination of good practices for supporting mental health and family caregiving across Europe.

Stronger collaboration and knowledge exchange through hands-on learning, workshops, and site visits.

Improved communication and cooperation among mental health users, professionals, and family caregivers.

Enhanced public awareness and advocacy for mental health through impactful awareness events.

We are proud to contribute to this important initiative and look forward to sharing knowledge, building networks, and promoting more inclusive and compassionate mental health care systems.

You can learn more about the project by following us on social media: LinkedIn, X (Twitter)

EPIONI Facilitates Job Shadowing of Mental Health Professionals from Belgium

The Greek Carers Network EPIONI had the honour to facilitate a job shadowing mobility programme for five mental health professionals from CNP Saint Martin (Dave, Belgium) in Athens, Greece, from 5 to 9 October 2025.

This professional exchange took place within the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme (2024-1-BE01-KA121-VET-000200268) and aimed to promote the exchange of knowledge and best practices in the field of community-based mental health care.

During their stay, the participants visited several public and non-profit mental health service providers across the Athens area, including:

The Cognitive Rehabilitation Unit (CRU) at the Multidisciplinary Mental Health Hospital of Attica, founded by Dr. Dimitrios Kontis;

Two Day Centres of PEPSAEE in Athens

The PEPSAEE Day Centre for Employee Support in Aigaleo, offering psychological and employability support;

The Social Cooperative Enterprise KOISPE EV ZEEN, supporting people with mental health challenges through vocational training and social inclusion;

The Society of Social Psychiatry P. Sakellaropoulos, focusing on psychosocial support and community integration.

The programme also featured cultural and networking activities, including visits to the Acropolis Museum, the National Library of Greece and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center, as well as professional meetings with experts, service users, and representatives from EPIONI.

A highlight of the visit was the participation in the European Carers Day 2025 event organised by EPIONI at the Office of the European Parliament in Greece, under the theme “Invisible No More: Let’s See & Value Migrant Care.”

This fruitful collaboration strengthened the bonds between Belgian and Greek mental health professionals and reaffirmed the importance of European cooperation, continuous training, and mutual learning in improving the quality of care and support for people living with mental health conditions and their caregivers.

Final event of the Erasmus+ project EUF

The final event of the Erasmus+ project EUF – Engaging and Empowering EU Families provided an insightful overview of the project's innovative efforts to strengthen family dynamics through creative methodologies. The event served as a forum for dialogue and knowledge-sharing, bringing together project partners, experts, and participants.

Event Overview

Friday, March 7, 2025, Somateio Ermis, 1 Dragatsaniou & Vosporou, Elliniko 167 77

Key Highlights

The Power of Storytelling – Demonstrated how storytelling fosters emotional resilience and strengthens family bonds.

Digital Empowerment – Introduced the EUF digital guide, a valuable resource designed to support families in navigating daily challenges.

Interactive Family Engagement – Showcased the EUF card game, which combined fun and learning to create meaningful family interactions.

The event featured presentations by project partners and distinguished experts, offering unique insights into the project's outcomes and the practical applications of its tools. Attendees had the opportunity to engage in discussions, exchange knowledge, and reflect on the impact of the project in supporting families across Europe.

Caring for the Caregiver: A dramatherapy group for those who give care

In the daily rhythm of caregiving, many of us gradually lost touch with our own voice. Through this series of meetings, we offered a safe, welcoming space for expression — a place where caring for others could coexist with caring for ourselves.

This free supportive intervention was designed especially for informal carers: parents, partners, adult children, relatives, friends, and anyone who provided ongoing support to a loved one. It also welcomed professionals who carried a caregiving role in their personal life and wanted to reconnect with their own needs through creativity.

Across 20 sessions (90 minutes each), participants came together in a small group setting to share experiences, reduce feelings of isolation, and explore the emotional weight of caregiving in a respectful and non-judgemental environment. Using dramatherapy methods — images, roles, symbols, storytelling, movement, and play — the group supported carers to express what is often difficult to say in words, strengthen emotional resilience, and rediscover parts of

themselves that may have been put "on hold" by daily responsibilities.

An individual introductory meeting took place before joining the group, ensuring that each participant felt informed, comfortable, and supported from the beginning.

Location: 8 Alkamenous St., P.E.PS.A.E.E. Day Centre "In the heart of the city"

Schedule: Every Tuesday at 16:30

Duration: 20 sessions of 90 minutes

Participation: Free of charge

Facilitator: Andriana Xenaki, Psychologist and trainee Dramatherapist

Information & registration: andrianaxenaki1@gmail.com / 6942943317 (registrations open until November 7th)

"A space to remember that caregivers, too, need care."

Online Caregivers' Support Group

EPIONI implemented in 2025 a recurring free online support initiative for informal caregivers, held on the first Thursday of every month. The Online Caregivers' Support Group provided a safe, respectful space where caregivers could share lived experiences, receive emotional support, and exchange practical advice for everyday caregiving challenges.

Through structured yet open discussion, participants connected with fellow caregivers, reduced feelings of isolation, and identified practical solutions by learning from one another's coping strategies and real-life approaches. Each meeting encouraged active participation, mutual understanding, and peer-to-peer support — strengthening a sense of community and solidarity among caregivers.

Meetings took place via Zoom, from 17:00 to 18:00, ensuring easy access for caregivers regardless of location or mobility constraints.

Format: Meet | Discuss | Get Advice

Together, participating caregivers made caregiving feel more manageable, more connected, and more supportive.

Summer Camp for EPIONI Members

The City of Athens once again proves to be a steadfast and valuable ally of associations and foundations, renewing an admirable initiative that stands as a model of genuine care and support for the members of the local community.

This initiative offers free accommodation for members of non-profit associations at the City of Athens Summer Camp in Agios Andreas, Attica, from 29 August to 18 September 2025. Through this programme, people with disabilities and family caregivers have the opportunity to enjoy, at no cost, a period of rest, entertainment, and creative activities. The summer camp is located in Agios Andreas, Attica, about 30 km from the centre of Athens, within a pine-covered area of 180 acres, where the mountain meets the sea. It is considered one of the best camps in the Balkans, offering comfortable living conditions, being fully equipped with sports facilities and infrastructure in line with modern European standards, and ensuring a high level of safety for all campers.

The City of Athens fully covers the costs of accommodation, meals, and recreational activities, confirming its tangible commitment to supporting local communities and promoting education, culture, and social cohesion.

Members of our association, in collaboration with the Association of Siblings of People with Mental Health Problems, will once again enjoy a unique experience. In addition to moments of relaxation in the well-organised facilities, they will have the opportunity to participate in cultural events and outdoor activities that foster team spirit and strengthen their personal development.

Social media presence

Platform	Followers 2025	Followers 2024	Increase	Increase%	Comparison with NGOs in Greece
Facebook	6.053	5.100	+953	+18,7%	Above the average for small and medium-sized NGOs
LinkedIn	3.246	2.815	+431	+15,3%	Strong presence, high for NGOs
X (Twitter)	1.136	1.145	-9	-0,8%	Stable / slightly below average
Instagram	3.741	3.141	+600	+19,1%	Stable / slightly below average
YouTube	238	193	+45	+23,3%	Growing, above average

Digital Presence (2024–2025)

During 2025, EPIONI's digital presence continued to strengthen steadily, confirming the dynamic growth of our community and the increasing reach of our work to the wider public. In a particularly demanding digital environment for NGOs in Greece, EPIONI recorded a meaningful increase in followers across most social media platforms.

Facebook remained our main communication channel with the carer community, showing an increase of almost 19%, which reflects the public's continued trust in the informative and supportive content we produce. At the same time, Instagram showed similarly strong growth, confirming that visual and human-centred content (events, experiential activities, carers' stories) is a key driver for dissemi-nating our social impact.

Of particular importance is the strengthening of our presence on **LinkedIn,** with an increase of over 15%. This development reflects the reinforcement of our institutional profile and the gradual establishment of EPIONI as a credible partner in European projects, collaborations, and mental health and care policies.

YouTube, although smaller in absolute numbers, recorded the highest percentage growth, indicating strong potential for further use of audiovisual material (interviews, conferences, educational content).

By contrast, **X (Twitter)** remained relatively stable—a trend observed more broadly across civil society organisations—without diminishing its value as a tool for institutional updates and information.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank you for your cooperation:

1) The members, members of the scientific committee, friends, volunteers and students from Greece and abroad who are doing their internships.

2) The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the State Scholarship Foundation (IKY), the Youth and Lifelong Learning Foundation (I.NE.DI.BI.M.), the Region of Attica, the Municipality of Athens and the Municipality of Aegina.

3) The Bodossaki Foundation and AIGEAS AMKE

ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΜΠΟΔΟΣΑΚΗ

ΑΙΓΕΑΣ ΑΜΚΕ

3) The companies VIANEX, Boehringer Ingelheim, Saronic Nephrological Centre of, Pfizer and Pharmaserve-Lilly

VIANEX S.A. PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURERS MEMBER OF GIANNAKOPOULOS GROUP

Boehringer Ingelheim

SARONIC NEPHROLOGICAL CENTER

Pfizer

Lilly ΦΑΡΜΑΣΕΡΒ

4) The collaborating organizations: Alzheimer Hellas, Federation of Mental Health Organisations "Argo", Eurocarers, EUFAMI, EASPD, Mental Health Europe, Centre for Children and Adolescents, Association of Cardiac Officers of the Navy, Coast Guard & Friends, Heart of the Child, EPAPSY, PEPSAEE, EDRA, EKPSY P. Sakelaropoulos, Saronic Nephrological Centre, Association of Patients of Greece, Hellenic Psychiatric Society, Panhellenic Federation of People with Multiple Sclerosis, Obrela, Society of Preventive Psychiatry, European Association of Professors Emeriti, Hermes Association, ENIEA, Metropolitan College, University of West Attica, 50+ Hellas, European Federation of Neurological Associations (EFNA), European Federation of Neurological Associations (EFNA).

5) Media sponsors: www.psychologynow.gr, https://www.iatronet.gr/ http://www.healthdaily.gr/

www.epioni.gr

Greek Carers Network EPIONI
15 Victoros Ougko St., Metaxourgio, 10437, Athens, Greece
Tel. +30 211 850 7085, +30 6946 00 35 22 (WhatsApp)
Fax.: +30 210 440 6003
info@epioni.gr

https://www.facebook.com/epioni
https://twitter.com/epioni_ngo
https://www.instagram.com/greek_carers_network/
https://www.linkedin.com/company/epioni
https://www.youtube.com/GreekCarersNetworkEPIONI