



OUTPUT 09

Interactive HE Case Studies of Innovation in HE Student Mental Health Support

Partners on Embrace HE project



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Executive Summary

This document is part of the outputs of the EMBRACE HE project, which was funded by the ERASMUS+ UK Agency and is running 2019-2022, project number KA203-5B5EC153.

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Project partners are: Birmingham City University, United Kingdom; Universidad Publica de Navarra Spain; Western Balkans Institute, Serbia; Panepistimo Kritis Greece; Vilnius Universitetas, Lithuania. Colleagues from Públic University of Navarre led the development of this toolkit, with support from the other project partners.

The main objective of this output was to present innovative examples in supporting the well-being and mental health of HE students. Considering the effort that Higher Education Institutions have made to improve the recent challenge of the mental health care gap in Higher Education, this output was designed to make visible some innovative practices that support the mental health and wellbeing of students.

Methodologically, some criteria for selecting the practices were established by the led partner. Taking into account the previous outputs of the project, it was concluded that the practices to be systematised as case studies should follow the following criterias:

- a) Be innovative (that is, it has a characteristic that makes it unique and stands out among other services due to its specificity, eg: it is new, the only service at a national level, having been recognized for its innovation, having been a pioneer or a model to follow for other services , make use of a new or special methodology etc).
- b) Be run by the university either by staff or by student associations.

- c) Have sufficient evidence (qualitative or quantitative) that proves its positive results in the well-being and mental health of students. In case of not having evidence as it is a new practice, dispose of an evaluation plan.
- d) Attend and respond to some of the current mental health care needs of Higher Education Students (eg: attend to the psychological care needs derived from Covid-19, attend to the most frequent psychological disorders of students, support any situation of stress derived from the academic load, etc).

Five case studies were selected on the basis of their innovation, relevance and positive effects on student mental health and well-being. Key information from each was compiled and presented in a report. In addition, an animated video was created for each case study, with the aim of facilitating access and delivery of the main information of each practice. Each team of the EMBRACE HE Consortium chose one innovative practice to be systematised and disseminated. In the document it can be found the set of details of those selected practices:

- Mental health first aid training: a programme designed to train staff in mental health first aid issues and to support their students in difficult mental health situations. It's developed by "Mental Health First Aids England": <https://mhfaengland.org/individuals/higher-education/>.
- Caring Universities: an electronic mental health intervention that aims to provide information about student mental health, while promoting a range of online courses to address mental health issues such as anxiety. It is the result of a collaborative project between the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Universiteit Leiden, Universiteit Maastricht, Universiteit Utrecht, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Holland University of Applied Sciences, and University of Amsterdam: <https://caring-universities.com/nl/>.
- Compludog: an animal-assisted intervention to reduce anxiety and stress before exams. It is a programme conceived at Complutense University of Madrid.
- Supporting War Refugee Students in Higher Education: an example of how to respond to the mental health crisis faced by students at a Lithuanian university due to the current war situation in Ukraine. It has been developed by Vilnius University: <https://www.vu.lt/en/>

- Building Resilience and Managing Zoom Fatigue: a guide designed to support staff and students on issues related to burnout and fatigue due to overuse of online platforms for study and work. This has been created by the Students' Counselling Centre at University of Crete: <https://en.uoc.gr/>

In addition to these case studies, six practices developed in other universities were also briefly described for their potential for innovation and effectiveness in supporting the mental health of students in higher education.

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