



## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

### **Improving Mental Health in Small and Medium Enterprises** EU-Horizon 2020 funded MINDUP project has started

**Cork.** Enterprises are increasingly aware of the tremendous costs caused by absenteeism and presenteeism due to depression and the responsibility to support mental health of their employees. The EU-funded large-scale research MINDUP ("Mental Health Promotion and Intervention in Occupational Settings") addresses non-clinical aspects such as stress or burnout as well as depression as a prevalent and severe medical disorder. In January 2020, the MINDUP Consortium, coordinated by Prof. Ella Arensman, School of Public Health and National Suicide Research Foundation, University College Cork, met for its first project meeting in Cork, Ireland. The consortium consisting of 17 high-ranked international partners discussed the approaching work packages, milestones and desired impact of MINDUP in order to develop, implement and evaluate various (online) interventions and training materials. "The MINDUP project will provide sustainable interventions for mental health promotion in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Europe and Australia by involving employees, supervisors and managers, and by combining expertise from all relevant disciplines. A unique aspect of the MINDUP intervention programme is the focus on both non-clinical aspects, such as burnout or stress and clinical conditions, including severe depression and anxiety", says Arensman.

#### **Why research on mental health in the workplace matters**

Whereas established employer guidelines on alcohol related problems already exist, little is known on how to address the topic of depression and suicidal behaviour. Prof. Ulrich Hegerl emphasizes: "Depression is such a common and serious mental condition that basic knowledge on the topic is urgently needed also in SMEs. Part of this knowledge can be learning how to conduct a conversation with an employee who, for example, no longer has lunch with his colleagues or sits crying in front of his computer. Such measures can pave the way to professional treatment and thus avoid the costs of absenteeism and presenteeism". By training HR managers, executives and employees, affected colleagues may find their way to professional treatment more quickly.

#### **Proven expertise from 17 project partners**

MINDUP will design interventions that address a range of complaints and psychiatric conditions (such as depression, anxiety disorders, stress-related symptoms) and will be targeted at and delivered to SMEs in the areas of construction, healthcare and ICT. MINDUP merges experts in mental health, suicide prevention, depression, stigma, implementation science, health economics and other interdisciplinary fields from Albania, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Kosovo, the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom, Australia and the USA. Overall, the consortium aims at improving the early recognition and treatment of depression in occupational settings and reduce suicidal behaviour. The consortium will build on proven



concepts (EAAD's 4-level programme, [iFightDepression](#) self-management programme and information website), which will be adapted to the specific needs of SMEs.

### Learn more about the MINDUP project, consortium partners and related research:

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#### About

**Prof. Ella Arensman** is the coordinator of MINDUP and based with the School of Public Health and National Suicide Research Foundation, University College Cork. She is Visiting Professor with the Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention, Griffith University, Brisbane, Vice-President of EAAD and an expert advisor for WHO. Prof Arensman has been involved in research and prevention into suicide, self-harm and related mental health and social issues for more than 30 years, including several EU-funded projects. Her expertise represents multiple research areas, including risk and protective factors associated with suicide and self-harm, real-time surveillance of suicide and self-harm, and effectiveness of mental health promotion and suicide prevention programmes.

**Prof. Ulrich Hegerl** is president of EAAD. He is also president of the German Depression Foundation and holder of the Johann Christian Senckenberg Distinguished Professorship at the Goethe University Frankfurt. Prof. Hegerl is an international expert in depression research and suicide prevention and has coordinated several large EU-funded projects on these topics (e.g. [PREDI-NU](#), [OSPI Europe](#)).

**The European Alliance Against Depression** Within the EAAD, a network of experts (partners from 15 countries) has been collaborating since 2008 to tackle depression and suicidal behaviour by implementing community based 4-level interventions. This 4-level intervention concept has been rigorously evaluated and proven effective in reducing suicidal behaviour, enhancing public awareness of depression and improving knowledge and skills in dealing with depression and suicide in GPs and gatekeepers. Systematic process analyses, a large catalogue of intervention materials in many languages, practical experience from 10 years of implementation, and implementation guidelines for those interested to adopt this 4-level intervention approach are available for those interested to carry out own regional suicide preventive community based programmes. Next to that, the EAAD has been engaged in research on depression, e-MentalHealth and suicide prevention over the past 10 years.

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