

EVALUATION LETTER

With great joy we would like to evaluate on a Youth Exchange “Sport and Mental Health: Don’t Bury Your Emotions, Let It Flow” 2023-3-CY02-KA152-YOU-000172949, organized by NGO ACPELIA, Cyprus. The project brought together 60 young participants and 12 leaders from 6 countries: Poland, Lithuania, Romania, Bulgaria, Portugal and the host Cyprus in the wonderful Hylatio Tourist Village in Pissouri, Cyprus.

The main goal of the project was focused on young people’s mental health through sport and to create supportive environment where participants can engage in physical activity while dealing with mental health issue. The project aims to raise awareness of mental health issue, demonstrate the impact of active work on young people, and inspire compassion for the mental health issues of others as well. In addition, NGO ACEPLIA made sure everyone had opportunities for diverse learning and collaboration and encouraged them creativity and self-expression through a variety of exercises, including practical skills such as meditation, yoga, journal writing and many, many group activities.

Having all this in mind, we, Sport Volleyball Club “Gram v Raya”, Svilengrad, accepted to participate as a substitute partner for the project. We started immediately searching for participants from our club and prepared a meeting in early June to inform all the selected participants about the aim and goal of the project. Later on September we did another meeting to prepare everything needed: how and with what to present ourselves, our organization and our country. With the youths we had brilliant ideas about the cultural night, our vision and participation during the exchange. And in October our amazing trip began.

On arrival we met all the other participants through activities such as name games, drawing each other, presenting our names into small circles, the atmosphere was incredible for everyone. During the rest of the days the youths had the opportunity to raise their awareness of their mental health and its impact on their lives by interacting with each other during sessions. Promote sports as a healthier way of life by doing exercise outdoors. Developing practical skills related to various breathing techniques and sports that can help reduce stress and anxiety with the assistance of our facilitators. Promoting intercultural learning and social engagement among participants, fostering their ability to reduce stress and lead an active lifestyle by preparing a presentations about each country statistic of how many active sportsmen and sportswomen are there. Promoting active citizenship and social engagement among participants, fostering their ability to reduce stress and lead an active lifestyle, an activity which most of us wouldn’t forget. We all had the opportunity to explore village Pissouri by ourselves in terms of treasure hunting activity, where we all were divided in international groups with common goal, to find a certain places in the village, to speak and ask about the history of Pissouri and some of the local shops, markets and restaurants. All of the participants shared on the night reflection session that they were stunned how much welcoming and informative were the locals there. Unforgettable moments in their lives. Providing opportunities for personal and professional development, including improving mental health, team communication and cross-cultural competence by participating in tournaments of football and basketball between the participants. All of the sixty youths were divided once again in an international team, where they competed with each other. The fun and joy of playing boys and girls was with everyone. Creating a safe and supportive space for each participant that promotes learning and personal development via activities such as reflection sessions, creating a path to visualize their past and

making posters about their future healthy life. As always, everyone was thrilled to take part in each session and didn't hesitate to express their own emotions, opinions and understanding. Creating an environment where young people can learn to cope with stressful situations and activities that alleviate mental illness was also included during our project, where we visited a national basketball handicapped team of Limassol. All the participants had the opportunity to listen to the story of the players and trainers presented. They also experienced how hard is playing basketball in wheel chairs.

The facilitators, ACPELIA, created a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere during the whole project. The outdoor activities were most challenging for us, and the cultural and experiential diversity of the group enriched our discussions and broadened our perspectives on emotional expression. The project had a significant impact on the whole group. It provided valuable tools for emotional expression and reinforced the importance of supporting each other. The creative outcomes, such as films and personal reflections, helped our growth and learning process. The Youth Exchange was a transformative experience. It was well-organized, engaging, and impactful. We are grateful for the opportunity to participate and look forward to applying the insights gained in our work with young people. So right after we arrived back home, we started working on our dissemination plan we prepared during the project. Stoycho and Zhivko organized meetings with their co-workers, presenting all of our experience, learnings and work we did in Hylatio Tourist Village. Our participants also shared their experience and learning in front of their friends and classmates with presentation and photos they brought back home with them. We are glad that we had the opportunity to be called over as a substitute to the project and we can't wait to continue expanding our memories and knowledge to our surroundings.

Sincerely,

Sport Volleyball Club "Gram v Raya", Svilengrad

СПОРТЕН КЛУБ
"ГРЪМ В РАЯ -
СВИЛЕНГРАД"