



CHAMPIONS

Cooperative Harmonised
Action Model
to Stop Polarisation
in Our Nations

Activity Brief #7

Progress of the CHAMPIONS project

April 2020 to September 2020 (Month 13 – Month 18)

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Project overview

The CHAMPIONS project's central goal is the creation of offline working groups – “CHAMPIONS Roundtables”. These roundtables combine first-line-practitioners (FLPs) of different disciplines, professions, and institutions or agencies, to jointly develop effective detection and response solutions to counter polarization, build resilience, and to protect vulnerable groups in their local communities. FLPs are trained to build capacity to design solutions and programs to address the drivers of polarization and to collaborate efficiently by breaking down institutional barriers. To facilitate these processes of offline joined- up solution development, an online platform is developed.

In the medium term, the goal is that FLPs' actions not only affect vulnerable individuals, but also the wider community, who will be engaged in awareness-raising events, as well as local and national policy-makers.

The long-term aim of the project is to transfer the CHAMPIONS pilot model to other communities across the EU where other FLP Roundtables are established and FLPs become users of the developed platform. To achieve this, synergies with related EU-funded projects, platforms and networks are harnessed throughout the project and will continue after its implementation period.

Key information

Project Coordinator: Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania

Consortium: 8 members (Romania, Germany, Austria, Poland, Hungary)

Duration: 24 Months

Topic ID: ISFP-2017-AG-RAD

Objectives

1. To improve the understanding and awareness of FLPs from Romania, Poland, Hungary and Germany.
2. To enhance capacities and capabilities of FLPs for local level inter-organizational collaboration and to improve information sharing.
3. To disseminate and share local and EU-level best practices among FLPs transnationally.
4. To facilitate access of FLPs to relevant resources, videos, and online trainings for improving their professional skills.
5. To establish onsite models of cooperation in the partner countries to overcome 'siloing' and improve information sharing, detection, and response to polarization.
6. To develop the skills of FLPs to counter and reduce polarization and to encourage societal cohesion through offline and online training.
7. To improve capabilities for awareness raising on polarization and trust between civic society organizations, communities, and FLPs.
8. To utilize moderate voices and key influencers in the community for impactful awareness-raising activities.

Main activities of the CHAMPIONS project

This section outlines the progress of the CHAMPIONS project between April 2020 up to September 2020 (the third quarter of the project). The report provides a summary of the overall progress made, followed by a more detailed account on the project accomplishments per work package. Special attention is given to the strategies employed by the project partners to manage the challenges that arose due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

All deliverables for the third quarter were submitted on-time or with a slight delay due to COVID-19; with all revised deadlines agreed with the Project Officer.

Major achievements during third quarter of the project include the successful adaptation of the CHAMPIONS Roundtables (**WP5**) to the COVID-19 situation through a variety of means, such as converting them into a digital format after extensive consultation with FLPs. Despite the challenges, the high level of commitment on the side of both the FLPs and partners resulted in a series of successful roundtables during this period.

A project highlight during the third quarter was the successful implementation of the **RADPOL2020 Conference** titled “Radicalisation in Central and Eastern Europe – trends, challenges and opportunities to counteract”. The conference was a joint initiative of three European projects, namely **CHAMPIONS**, **MINDb4ACT** (H2020 #740543), and **BRaVE** (H2020 #822189). Originally planned as a two-day conference in Poznan, Poland, the three consortia decided to hold the conference as an online event. The result was a series of three online webinars, held on 18 and 25 June, and 2 July 2020. The panelists discussed the trends of various forms of radicalization in Central and Eastern Europe and the challenges they bring. Participants had the opportunity to present their latest research results, to share good practices in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE), and to promote multi-agency cooperation in this field. In total, over 200 participants joined the webinars which were also recorded and are now available for public viewing on YouTube.¹

During the third quarter of the project the CHAMPIONS Online Platform (**WP3**) was further developed and integrated into www.firstlinepractitioners.com. This quarter saw the finalization of the Alert module (**A3.3**) as well as the Arena module (**A3.4**), with the platform consolidated in August (**A3.5**) and initial beta-testing done in September and October (**A6.6**) for finalization and launching in November. While all Training Yard (**WP4**) materials were completed at the end of the second quarter, this quarter saw the final polishing of resources, particularly the verification of the simulation exercises (**D4.6**) and their integration as a whole to the CHAMPIONS Online Platform system.

The results from the CHAMPIONS Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Implementation (**WP6**) are also laudable, with excellent feedback from FLPs on how partners have supported them through this difficult period of quarantine and restrictions, and how they ensured the smooth facilitation of the online and in-person roundtables.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jaj3b5QuGI8&feature=youtu.be>

Communication Activities

Communication and dissemination are central to this project (**WP7**). In the third quarter project results and updates were communicated via a series of newsletters (**D7.6**), activity briefs (**D7.7**), fact sheets (**D7.8**), and press releases (**D7.9**). All materials are permanently accessible on the project website <https://www.championsproject.eu/>.

The CHAMPIONS consortium also invested in a solid social media presence in order to disseminate project outputs in “real time” and to increase the awareness of the project. In this period the social media strategy resulted in over 840 organic CHAMPIONS Facebook page views. Furthermore, the followership of the CHAMPIONS Twitter page and the related Twitter accounts of @FLPractitioners, in collaboration with EU-programs funded programs TAKEDOWN (H2020 #700688) and ARMOUR (ISF-P #823683) has augmented to a total of 1,621 Followers as of this report.

Internally, the project partners communicated regularly via bi-monthly consortium calls and additional work package (WP) related calls. The project coordinator prepared monthly internal newsletters to visualize the progress of the project for the members of the consortium. Furthermore, the coordinator offered support through personal one-on-one calls and emails when needed.

Detailed Description

Work Package 1: Management and Coordination of the Action

- The consortium implemented Covid-19 response and mitigation strategies as agreed upon during virtual meetings on 13 March and 26 March 2020.
- The consortium management was mindful of the added stress on physical and mental wellbeing of consortium members.
- Based on the already established use of online tools (such as Google Suite) the project members could continue collaboration efficiently and effectively.
- In cooperation with other Horizon 2020 projects, CHAMPIONS implemented the RADPOL 2020 Conference in June and July 2020.
- A quarterly status update meeting was held online on 17 and 18 September 2020, during which partners agreed on a 3-month extension of the project.
- A special online meeting to discuss monitoring and evaluation took place on 24 September 2020.
- The consortium manager organized an international advisory board meeting on 29 September 2020.

Work Package 2: Identify & Assess: Joint Needs Assessment, Lessons Harvesting & Ex-Ante Evaluation and Baseline Mapping

- All activities for WP2 were completed on-time in the first quarter.

Work Package 3: Identify & Communicate - Creation of the Digital 'Alert' and 'Arena' Tools and Services

- The ALERT module (A3.3) was realized. Users can fill out an online questionnaire about a case of polarization or radicalization. Based on the data submitted, they receive a list of recommendations. The recommendations are based on advice that has been provided to solve previous (similar) cases in a database. In addition, the tool allows the FLP-users to request a more in-depth study of the case, by issuing an "alert request" which then involves other FLPs/domain experts in the case.
- The ARENA module (A3.4) was realized. The tool allows FLPs to communicate, collaborate on, and solve polarization and radicalization cases.
- The tools ALERT and ARENA were integrated into one platform on www.firstlinepractitioners.com. The platform also offers information on relevant public services, helplines, experts, contact points and online training. The platform was tested in August and September among consortium partners. Based on the tests and feedback the platform will be developed further.

Work Package 4: TRAIN – Creation & Harvesting of Online & Onsite Training & Learning Tools, Resources & Courses for FLPs: The CHAMPIONS Training Yard

- The final material was developed for the online platform Training Yard (**A4.5**). The platform will provide a dedicated service to enhance individual and institutional capacity through trainings, joint simulations, and case study exercises.
- When the testing of the platform and Training Yard materials by FLPs has been completed, the platform will be further adjusted and finalized. The final product will be ready at the end of the project.

Work Package 5: Interact & Cooperate – Creation & Capacity Building of CHAMPIONS Roundtables and Implementation of CHAMPIONS Roundtable Actions

- Hungary (**BCMAP** and **POLCAP**): the work on Roundtable 2 (26 February 2020), was continued online in two working groups. Two online events were held in April and May to discuss topics related to polarization within the community of the VIII district in Budapest. The sessions were attended by 10 FLPs. Furthermore, two online workshops were held: The workshop on 17 June 2020 focused on segregation in schools. The workshop on 4 June 2020 was dedicated to the topic of housing and cohabitation problems. It was followed by an online roundtable on 30 June.
- Germany (**CULTURES**): Roundtable 3 was held on 13 and 14 March 2020. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic many FLPs cancelled their participation. Only 3 could attend. Roundtable 4 on the topic of advocacy and community organizing was held on 12 and 13 of June 2020, with special attention to hygiene and distancing regulations. Roundtable 5 took place on 17 and 18 July. It was focused on online radicalization and media competence.
- Romania (**PATRIR**): An online roundtable on Crime Prevention and Prevention of Drug Addiction of Youth at Risk was organized on July 14 2020, which was attended by eight FLPs. The roundtable was followed up by a virtual meeting of participants on July 28 2020. A second roundtable was organized on the topic of Inclusive Education, which was attended by 33 FLPs. The roundtable was followed up by another online roundtable on inclusive education (5 August), in which 17 FLPs participated. On 2 and 3 September 2020 a special multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder roundtable on inclusive education, crime prevention and youth was held online. The event was attended by 13 participants.
- Poland (**IBS**): The roundtables in Warsaw were scaled down in participation size in order to abide by Covid-19 distancing rules. On 15 and 16 July 2020 5 FLP took part in the study visits, which were implemented as an adapted format of roundtables. The main theme of the event was security and prevention. The second study visit (26 and 27 August 2020) was attended by 8 FLPs and focused on education and prevention. The participants met with representatives from NGOs, museums, and security experts.

Work Package 6: Evaluate – Learn – Improve: Internal and External Monitoring, Participatory Action Evaluation, Improvement and Sustainability

- The Internal MELI and Recommendations Report (IV) was issued based on internal feedback within the project consortium.
- The External MELI and Recommendations Report (IV) was written based on the feedback received from the participants of the second series of roundtables and workshops.
- The External MELI and Recommendations Report (V) was completed. It includes the feedback received during the conduct of the third series of roundtables (July to September 2020).

Work Package 7: Leverage & Promote: Communication, Dissemination and Leveraging of Outputs, Products and Deliverables

- The consortium organized the RADPol Conference on Radicalization in Countries of Central and Eastern Europe, in cooperation with the EU-projects **MINDb4ACT** (H2020 #740543), and **BRaVE** (H2020 #822189) in June and July 2020.
- A set of activity briefs, newsletters, press releases, and policy recommendations were created and disseminated, and the progress was reported in the respective deliverables D7.6-D7.9. All the material is available on the project website <https://www.championsproject.eu/media/>.



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