

## CHAMPIONS Newsletter 03/2021



# Internal and External Monitoring – Experiences from the CHAMPIONS Project

**CHAMPIONS is an EU-funded project whose main objective is to create offline working groups of First-Line Practitioners (FLPs) who respond to radicalization and polarization. This newsletter highlights the consortium's strategies to monitor and evaluate project implementation from internal and external perspectives.**

Project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) has widely been included in project management strategies and is considered a golden standard in making the collaboration more fruitful, keeping the project's pace and ensuring that the best results are achieved. In the past, evaluation occurred after a project had been implemented, was carried out by an external evaluator and informed a funding agency about whether the resources have been managed and spent in a responsible manner. Newer approaches to M&E focus on continuous and internal evaluation. The approach taken on by the CHAMPIONS consortium goes further. By incorporating internal and external monitoring and evaluation activities throughout the project cycle, this participatory approach allows for internal learning and agile project management through regular feedback loops between the partners of the consortium. The aim was to ensure a continuous learning and innovation curve of the work methods.

CHAMPIONS is designed as a multi-stakeholder project that engages FLPs working on topics of radicalization, extremism polarization in offline working groups and in developing online tools that can support their daily work in the community, with new target groups and with new



This project was funded by the European Union's Internal Security Fund — Police.  
Grant agreement No: 823705.

stakeholders. Therefore, monitoring and evaluation activities were always intended to be an important part of the project implementation to ensure that project activities and outputs meet the needs of participants and end-users. As a consortium, we aimed to produce tools that advance the state of the field based on a continuous consultation and dialogue with those working in the field.

The internal and external Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Implementation reports (MELIs) were valuable sources to get input, ideas, suggestions and hear criticism. The CHAMPIONS management team focused on internal monitoring and evaluation to assess whether project management and internal collaboration were running smoothly and how cooperation within the project could be improved further.



### **The M&E Approach of the CHAMPIONS Consortium**

In order to ensure regular monitoring and evaluation activities, the project plan included six internal and six external monitoring and evaluation rounds, which had four objectives:

First, the approach was to evaluate project progress and performance within the consortium to ensure smooth implementation and internal satisfaction with the way the project is managed, how partners collaborate in the consortium and continuously address any challenges. Second, we aimed to produce deliverables and results that are fit for purpose and match the needs of first-line practitioners. The evaluations were an opportunity to check if the consortium was satisfied with the work process and standard of the deliverables produced. Third, the consortium used the M&E rounds to enable beta-testing of online and offline training materials and tools, so that these can be used in the local contexts and can potentially be scaled up for use across EU member states as new developments or suggestions came up. Fourth, the consortium used it to gather and synthesize lessons learnt that could inform and support the development of projects and policies in the future. The consortium has been aiming to produce outputs meant for future development, growth and innovation.



### *Internal Monitoring*

Internal monitoring took place regularly (every 3 months), leading to 6 Internal MELI reports. The reports presented feedback regarding project implementation, mitigation strategies, impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and suggestions for solutions to particular issues in project implementation.

The Consortium members were asked to provide anonymous general feedback on the project management and communication, and timely feedback on collaborative work on specific project deliverables. They were also given the opportunity to suggest improvements, flag issues or concerns they might have and finally to hear what others have to say about working in the group.

The internal monitoring documents collected show an accurate view of the project, with ups and downs and suggestions for any potential future cooperation of the same group. Finally, one of the deliverables of the project will be a Participatory Action MELI Toolkit that will showcase the best practices in M&E in projects involving tools for the wider use of the community.

### *External Monitoring*

Consortium members conducted monitoring and evaluation exercises with participants in CHAMPIONS roundtables, workshops, awareness-raising events in Germany, Hungary, Romania and Poland. During gatherings and events, participants were asked to assess the events and to provide suggestions for improvements or constructive feedback. Furthermore, first-line practitioners were involved in feedback rounds (through surveys and interviews) and beta-testing of the online tools developed by the CHAMPIONS consortium.

The feedback provided by practitioners was important to improve the usability and fitness for the digital platform Alert/Arena/Training Yard, which is intended to be a valuable tool for practitioners after the end of the project. The transnational approach taken during the external evaluations also had the advantage of creating a broad perspective of the needs of FLPs in different national contexts. It has also given insights to the consortium on sustainability and exploitation and the potential actions for connecting these national contexts.

## **Outlook**

The experiences within the CHAMPIONS project highlight that monitoring requires a participatory approach of internal and external monitoring where all members of the consortium are free to provide input on an equal basis. Regular monitoring exercises within the CHAMPIONS project allowed the management team to spot potential issues and problems early on, and provided a helpful addition to project meetings and consortium calls.

While external monitoring and evaluation was especially important in the CHAMPIONS project, to ensure that the project outputs meet the external participants and end-users'



needs, internal monitoring also played an important role in ensuring successfully project management and collaboration between the consortium members.

While the six internal and external monitoring and evaluation reports are confidential, a final report on efficiency, effectiveness, inclusiveness, impact, sustainability and relevance of the CHAMPIONS project will be produced and made publicly available at the end of the project in June 2021.

**CHAMPIONS - Cooperative Harmonized Action Model to Stop Polarisation in Our Nations**

The main objective of the project is to develop collaboration models for establishing working groups between first-line-practitioners. The offline approach is supported by collaborative online tools, practitioner trainings and digital services.



[www.championsproject.eu](http://www.championsproject.eu)



This project was funded by the European Union's Internal Security Fund — Police.  
Grant agreement No: 823705.