

PRESS RELEASE

Main achievements and the way forward CHAMPIONS project closing

The closing of the CHAMPIONS project marks an end to the regular activities of the consortium, but also opens the door for a new path of cooperation, using the tools and harnessing the networks that were built in the course of the project.

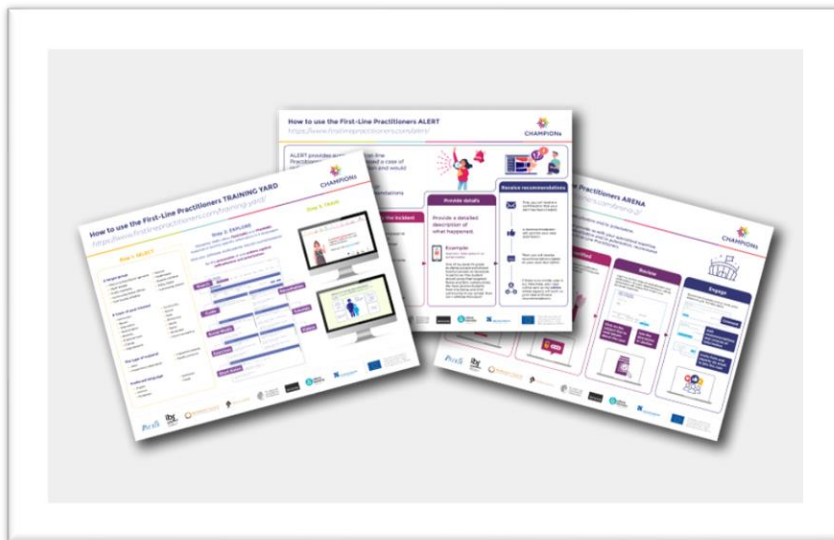
The CHAMPIONS project's central goal was the creation of offline working groups – **CHAMPIONS Roundtables**. These roundtables combined first-line-practitioners (FLPs) of different disciplines, professions, and institutions or agencies, to jointly develop effective detection and response solutions to counter polarization and radicalization in local communities. The local roundtables provided not only an import opportunity for FLPs to receive training, but also to expand their professional network, which will remain after the end of the project.

The topics of the roundtables matched the specific needs on the ground. [BCMAP](#) and [POLCAP](#) addressed polarization, housing and cohabitation issues in the community of district VIII in Budapest, Hungary. [Cultures Interactive](#) organized roundtables on youth engagement and media competence in Berlin, Germany. [PATRIR](#) in Romania focused on youth at risk, inclusive education and countering group-focused hatred in Cluj-Napoca. [IBS](#)'s roundtables addressed security and prevention in Warsaw and Dąbrowa Górnicza in Poland.

Based on the positive feedback of the participants, CHAMPIONS recommends the model of local stakeholder engagement through roundtables to tackle polarization and radicalization. Practical information on how to implement roundtables has been included in the [Training Yard](#) which provides a wide selection of online information and training materials for first-line practitioners.

Continued online cooperation

The long-term aim of the project was to transfer the CHAMPIONS pilot model to other communities across the EU where other FLP Roundtables are established and FLPs become users of an online platform. In this context, the interconnected modules [Alert](#) and [Arena](#) were developed, which provide a forum for FLPs to flag cases of radicalization and polarization, which can be discussed and addressed within a community of FLPs and experts. The online tools ensure the sustainability of the project by providing a permanent online space for



cooperation between change agents. The CHAMPIONS partners also implemented local awareness raising events to ensure that the online modules are known to practitioners. This effort should ensure that the tools will be used by a wide community of practitioners in the long run.

Local strategies for sustainability

The project partners in Germany, Romania, Austria, Hungary and Poland implemented specific local strategies to ensure the sustainability of project outputs:

Cultures Interactive's empowered roundtable participants to become multipliers for social cohesion in Berlin-Neukölln. To achieve this goal **Cultures Interactive** trained participants, especially youth workers, in the long term on how to deal with young people who engage in behaviours of group hatred. The participants will in turn carry their knowledge and experience from the roundtables into the work context and to their colleagues.

PATRIR built a very strong network of relevant NGOs in Cluj in Romania. The stakeholder network also includes state authorities, cultural institutions, and organizations that work on social inclusion of vulnerable youth, especially youth from disadvantaged areas, such as the Roma community. Local roundtables acted as multipliers of existing youth work through enriching youth work by incorporating a new dimension on the prevention and tackling of polarization. The focus on polarization and radicalization was crucial since Romania witnessed the rise of a new right, an increase of divisive narratives among youth, in combination with rising unemployment during the Covid pandemic. **PATRIR** created a community of

CHAMPIONS
30 Ion Ghica | Cluj-Napoca | CJ400306 | Romania
www.championsproject.eu
patrir@projectchampions.eu

practitioners in Cluj that is fully functional and will continue to thrive after the end of the project. FLPs have already been brought on board in other local activities (for example multiculturalism days), international projects (BRAVE) and continue to be part of the active collaborators of **PATRIR**.

In Hungary, local roundtables showed the need of online tools for cooperation and advise for teachers facing problems with segregation in schools. Therefore, **BCMAP** and **POLCAP** are confident that teachers will become the main beneficiaries of ALERT, ARENA and the Training Yard in Hungary.

In Poland, a local multi-agency group responsible for prevention and countering of radicalization was established in Dąbrowa Górnicza. The plan is to embed the group within the municipal structure, in order to ensure its sustainability. **IBS** will continue to hold regular meetings with the group, which will also be consulted to develop ALERT and ARENA further to better fit local needs.

SYNYO received important feedback on the FirstlinePractitioners.com platform that it had developed during previous projects, and which it vouches to improve and develop further. The platform in itself is a success story of sustainability, since it permanently makes available the outputs of the SAT-LAW project, TAKEDOWN project, MINDb4ACT project, ARMOUR project, and now the CHAMPIONS project. SYNYO will continue gathering and making available relevant knowledge for practitioners on a single platform.

CHAMPIONS also provided lasting impacts in the academic sector. The IT partner in the project, **TU Darmstadt**, highlighted that the data, models and algorithms developed for the online platforms may be used for further research purposes in the fields of polarization and radicalization but also in other application domains that have similar structural aspects. **Hochschule Niederrhein** will continue to integrate the findings, experiences and developments from CHAMPIONS in workshops, conferences and lectures in Germany.

Reaching out to the European community of experts

To make the outputs of the project visible across Europe, CHAMPIONS presented the project results jointly with 5 ISF-P funded projects in the [European Conference on Preventing Polarization & Violent Radicalization](#) that connected researchers and practitioners from 15 European countries. Spanning over 4 days, the conference featured 6 panel discussions and 11 interactive workshops that addressed the topic of polarization and extremism from diverse perspectives.

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Topics covered during the conference ranged from the development of serious computer games to boost the resilience of youngsters to radicalization, city-based approaches and local initiatives to counter polarization and marginalization, sharing of gender, human-rights, and peacebuilding perspectives, to academic discussion on the root-causes of extremism. The conference presentations, project videos and recorded sessions are available on the platform [firstlinepractitioners.com](https://www.firstlinepractitioners.com).

The way forward

The CHAMPIONS project highlighted the need to engage diverse local stakeholders in developing targeted responses to radicalization and polarization that are fit for the local context and benefit local communities in a lasting manner. Furthermore, exchanges across national contexts allowed FLPs to become aware of similarities and differences in radicalization and polarization issues and how they are dealt with in different regions.

We firmly believe that the relationships that have been built among practitioners during the CHAMPIONS project will remain strong after the formal ending of the project. We look forward to working together with our local and international partners in the future to address polarization and radicalization.

For further information please contact

Ms Dana Dolghin, CHAMPIONS Coordinator, PATRIR
 +31650701271, dana.dolghin@patrir.eu

