YOUTHDMH · COST ACTION CA23153

STSMs: An Overview of Year One Short-Term Scientific Missions

D1.2.3 Annual report on Short-Term Scientific Missions

WG1 – Inclusion, Youth Engagement, and Inter-disciplinary Collaboration

October 2025

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Funded by the European Union

ANNUAL REPORT ON SHORT-TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSIONS

STSMs: An Overview of Year One Short-Term Scientific Missions

DELIVERABLE
D1.2.3 Annual report on Short-Term Scientific Missions

WORKING GROUP
WG1 – Inclusion, Youth Engagement, and Inter-disciplinary Collaboration

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DATE
15 October 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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At a glance

This report brings together summaries of Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) undertaken during the first year of YouthDMH COST Action CA23153. It documents the aims of the missions, the activities carried out by grantees with their host institutions, the main scientific and capacity-building outcomes, and the collaborations and follow-up activities arising from the visits. Across the missions, researchers exchanged expertise, developed and refined research protocols and instruments, advanced reviews and manuscripts, explored digital assessment and intervention approaches, and established or strengthened links between institutions and countries. Several missions also supported early-career researchers and participants working in Inclusiveness Target Countries by providing access to specialist expertise, research infrastructure and international collaborators. The reports show that STSMs have contributed to the scientific work of YouthDMH Working Groups while creating opportunities for knowledge exchange and future joint research.

Key messages

- STSMs have supported cross-border knowledge exchange and collaboration among YouthDMH researchers.
  • Missions have contributed to concrete research activities, including review protocols, surveys, conceptual frameworks, prototypes and manuscripts in preparation.
  • Training and access to host-institution expertise have strengthened research capacity, including for early-career researchers and participants from Inclusiveness Target Countries.
  • Follow-up longer-term collaborations remain important next steps for many of the missions.

Cross-border collaboration
STSMs connected home and host institutions across countries and disciplines, creating opportunities for continued exchange.

Research development
Missions advanced reviews, research instruments, protocols, conceptual frameworks and early-stage intervention ideas.

Capacity building
Grantees gained methodological, technical and interdisciplinary experience through direct work with host research teams.

NAVIGATION

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Introduction

STSMs aim at supporting individual mobility, strengthening existing networks and fostering collaboration between COST Action Participants. They should specifically contribute to the scientific objectives of this COST Action, whilst at the same time allowing those taking part in the missions to learn new techniques or methods, gain access to specific facilities, instruments or data that are not available in their own institution/organisation. STSMs are research visits that support individual mobility and strengthen collaboration between institutions. They allow researchers to visit a host institution in another COST country to carry out research, learn new methods, access specific resources, and contribute to the goals of the Action.

STSM Application Assessment and Selection Criteria

STSM applications are evaluated against a set of criteria designed to ensure their scientific quality, relevance and contribution to the objectives of YouthDMH. The assessment considers the relevance of the proposed mission to the Action's aims and Working Groups (weighted twice), its potential to foster interdisciplinary collaboration (weighted twice), scientific quality and clarity, feasibility and planning, and the expected benefits for both the applicant and the host institution. In addition to these criteria, the Grant Coordinator gives particular attention to the relevance of applications to the YouthDMH network, the scientific strength and clarity of the proposed work, and the promotion of inclusion and diversity. Applications from researchers based in Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITCs) and early-career researchers receive additional consideration. Feasibility is an essential requirement: proposals must present realistic objectives and activities that can be achieved within the proposed mission period. Applications involving unrealistic plans, such as large-scale data collection during a very short visit, are not considered suitable.

Further information on STSM eligibility, application procedures, assessment criteria and funding opportunities is available on the YouthDMH Short-Term Scientific Missions webpage.

REPORT OVERVIEW

This report provides an overview of the Short-Term Scientific Missions undertaken during Year One of YouthDMH COST Action CA23153. It brings together the individual mission reports to illustrate how STSMs have supported the Action's scientific objectives, strengthened collaboration between participating institutions and countries, and provided opportunities for researchers to develop new skills and expertise. The accounts highlight the contributions made to Working Group activities, the research outputs initiated or advanced through mobility, and the opportunities for continued collaboration within the YouthDMH network.

Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) – Year 1

Please find below summary overviews of the STSMs that took place during Year One of the Action.

STSM Title: Developing a Systematic Review Protocol for Contextual Assessments of Youth Mental Health
Start and End Date: 18/08/2025 – 28/08/2025
Grantee: Bojana Dinić
Host Institution: Kırklareli University, Türkiye
Home Institution: University of Niš, Serbia
Duration: 10 days
Working Group: WG3 Task 3.1

Objectives

The Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) supported the development of a systematic review on contextual assessments of youth mental health within the YouthDMH COST Action. The 10-day visit to the **Kirklareli University with Assoc. Prof Esra Bozkanat Cergibozan** aimed to strengthen methodological expertise in systematic reviews, provide hands-on training in the Rayyan review platform, foster interdisciplinary collaboration between the home and host institutions, and support the participation of an Inclusiveness Target Country in the Action

Activities

During the STSM, the applicant received intensive training in systematic review methodology, including literature searching, database management, screening procedures, and the use of Rayyan. Search strategies were developed for major scientific databases, references were imported and deduplicated, and inclusion and exclusion criteria were refined using the PICOS framework in collaboration with members of the working group. The applicant participated in pilot and full title-and-abstract screening of nearly 4,000 studies and contributed to drafting the systematic review protocol following PRISMA guidelines.

Key Outcomes/Main Achievements

The STSM produced a draft methodology section and preliminary results for the systematic review Contextual Assessments of Youth Mental Health, directly contributing to WG3 Task 3.1 and Deliverable D3.1. The work included the development of screening procedures, eligibility criteria, search strategies, data extraction methods, and a PRISMA study selection flowchart. The mission also enhanced the applicant's expertise in evidence synthesis and systematic review methodology.

Impact and Follow-Up Activities

The STSM strengthened collaboration between researchers from Serbia and Türkiye and contributed to the multidisciplinary objectives of the YouthDMH COST Action. Follow-up work will include completing the systematic review through additional reviewer screening and manuscript development. The visit also laid the foundation for future joint research on digital media use and youth mental health, while opening opportunities for Erasmus+ exchanges and broader institutional collaboration. Overall, the STSM increased research capacity, promoted international networking, and enhanced the visibility of Inclusiveness Target Country partners within YouthDMH.

STSM Title: Digital Mental Health for Young People (YouthDMH) CA23153
Start and End Date: 25/08/2025 – 30/08/2025
Grantee: Dr. Aditi Gandotra
Host Institution: Tallinn University School of Digital Technologies
Home Institution: Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary
Duration: 6 days
Working Group: WG3

Objectives

The Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) supported a collaboration with **Dr. Sonia Claudia da Costa Sousa from Tallinn University, Estonia** to explore how digital technologies facilitate mental health among young people. Over the course of the visit, the STSM focused on drafting a comprehensive review paper that brings together existing theoretical models and empirical studies of digital media use in youth. This review will systematically map out the various digital platforms such as mobile apps, social media platforms and online support communities that adolescents and young adults use to manage stress, anxiety, and mood fluctuations with the hope of uncovering a recurring usage patterns and assess how these digital practices influence the mental health of young people.

An outline for the design and implementation of cross-sectional studies to capture the prevalence, context, and perceived effectiveness of digital media use practices will also be developed. Statistical approaches to examine how digital media use relate to key well-being indicators such as self-esteem, resilience, academic performance, and interpersonal relationships were also proposed.

Activities

During the STSM at Tallinn University, extensive discussions regarding potential avenues for collaborative research spanned several domains, ranging from empirical study designs to the preparation of review manuscripts.

1. Cross-Sectional Study Design

A primary focus of our exchange was the design and implementation of cross-sectional studies, with particular emphasis on refining research objectives and selecting robust methodological frameworks. Within this context, we considered a range of outcome variables that may be influenced by exposure to
push notifications in both typical and atypical individuals, including:

- Attention regulation
- Executive functioning
- Personality traits
- Mood states

These constructs were identified as central to understanding the cognitive and emotional effects of frequent digital interactions in everyday life.2. Review on Attention and Machine Learning in Young Adults

We also outlined a plan to co-author a review manuscript focusing on the intersection of attention and machine learning in young adults. The objectives of this review will be to:

- Synthesize the current body of empirical evidence.
- Evaluate the contributions of computational modelling in understanding attentional processes.
- Highlight research gaps and propose future directions for interdisciplinary work.

This review aims to bridge perspectives from psychology, neuroscience, and computer science, thereby offering a comprehensive framework for understanding attention in digitally immersed populations.

3. Review on Digital Technologies and Mental Health

A further area of collaboration discussed was the methodological framework for a second review paper exploring how digital technologies facilitate mental health among young people. The purpose of this review will be to:

- Map the use of various digital platforms, including mobile applications, social media, and online support communities.
- Examine how these technologies help adolescents and young adults manage stress, anxiety, and mood fluctuations.
- Identify recurring patterns of technology use and assess their implications for mental health outcomes.

This work aims to provide a structured and critical overview of digital coping practices, contributing to the broader discourse on the role of technology-enabled interventions in promoting youth mental health.

Key Outcomes/Main Achievements

The Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) successfully achieved its planned objectives and contributed directly to the Action's goals of fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and generating research outputs on the psychological effects of digital technologies. A key outcome of the visit was the development of a framework for cross-sectional studies examining the impact of push notifications on cognitive and emotional outcomes, including attention regulation, executive functions, personality traits, and mood states. These discussions laid the groundwork for future empirical research that aligns with the Action's deliverable of advancing evidence-based knowledge on digital influences on mental health.

In addition, two review manuscripts were conceptualized. The first will synthesize research on attention and machine learning in young adults, bridging insights from psychology, neuroscience, and computational modelling. The second will focus on digital technologies and youth mental health, mapping the role of mobile applications, social media, and online communities in managing stress, anxiety, and mood fluctuations. Both reviews aim to identify research gaps, provide structured evidence, and serve as deliverables contributing to the Action's scientific agenda.

Impact and Follow-Up Activities

Review manuscript 1: Attention and machine learning in young adults.
Review manuscript 2: Digital technologies and youth mental health.
Cross-sectional study framework: Push notifications and their impact on attention, executive functions, personality traits, and mood states.

Future collaborations identified: Joint publications, data collection, and external funding proposals.

STSM Title: Research Collaboration of Youth Digital Mental Health
Start and End Date: 29/06/2025 – 06/07/2025
Grantee: Alba Madrid Cagigal
Host Institution: Amsterdam School of Communication Research, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands
Home Institution: School of Psychology, University of Galway, Ireland
Duration: 8 days
Working Group: WG2

Objectives

The Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) supported a collaboration with **Professor Ine Beyens** in an international settings and learn new research skills that align with the applicant's area of study and focus on digital mental health interventions for university students with ongoing mental health difficulties.

The overall aim of the STSM was for the applicant to become familiar with Professor Beyen's research on the effects of social media use on adolescent's well-being. Moreover, opportunities for collaboration were explores, thus expanding the applicant's research skills and contributing to the PhD training.
The STSM also supported discussions around the work that the applicant has been conducting with Task Force 1: Review of existing digital resources (under Working Gorup 2: Help-seeking, information, and misinformation) and allow for face-to face interaction and feedback on the work to date and develop collaborative research ideas.

Finally, the STSM supported networking amongst other researchers and the cultivation of future research collaborations in the Netherlands.

Activities

The STSM supported a week of work under the supervision of Prof. Ine Beyens and involved multiple research tasks, the first of which involved a more in-depth review and understanding of Professor Beyen's work on the AWeSome Project which aims to investigate the relationship between adolescents' social media use and mental health and is divided into two parts.

The participant was given access to raw data collected from 2019 to 2020 including data from online surveys and experience sampling surveys as well as Instagram and TikTok archival downloads. This range of data allowed the grantee to become familiar with these types of data, especially data related to mental health, and furthermore, to learn about the statistical analyses that were performed.

Access to data collected in 2023, which included qualitative interviews, a baseline survey, a 100-day daily diary study, and an optional online exit interview, was also granted along with the review of a study that involved a total of 480 adolescents and the use of an app named m-path to collect the data. The grantee was able to become familiar with the publications and pre-prints that raised from this second-half of the project and therefore learn and have discussions about the research methods that were applied.

The grantee was also provided an opportunity to present an overview of her own PhD to the broader research team at the Amsterdam School of Communication Research (ASCoR), consisting of experts in youth digital mental use. TFollow on- open discussions resulted around different aspects of the grantee's research that could be improved as well as other research ideas to consider in relation to further study. Moreover, plans around the grantee's third PhD were discussed and best plans laid for a mixed-method study involving a pre-post survey and qualitative interviews.

Key Outcomes/Main Achievements

The overall aim of this STSM was to learn about Professor Beyens's research on the effects of social media use on adolescents' mental health which was successfully achieved thanks to her knowledge sharing with regards to the intensive longitudinal data from the AWeSome project. Knowledge sharing around this project and its structure and execution and collection gave the grantee confidence to explore incorporating this type of project into her own PhD research.

The review of publications resulting from the AWeSome project gave the grantee an understanding of the format and writing conventions required for publications in prestigious peer-reviewed journals along with the data collection and research methods that were applied greatly contributing the grantee ongoing PhD studies.

Impact and Follow-Up Activities

The impact of this STSM was most felt in the exposure to different research practises and design that align with the grantee's own area of work and research. Furthermore, work around WG2 Task Force 1: Review of existing digital resources (under Working Gorup 2: Help-seeking, information, and misinformation) was given significant attention and therefore, progress was made on the work undertaken by this task force. A publication was in progress with intentions to be submitted for publication into a peer-reviewed Journal (i.e. PLOS Digital Health) before the end of the year.

Professor Beyens offered invaluable guidance and assistance on supervising and co-leading this task force successfully and will continue to support and guide the progress of the task force Co-work on the preparation of a manuscript for publication was also planned. Strong connections to the Amsterdam School of Communication Research (ASCoR) were established, thus initiating a new network of PhD students and researchers extensive experience in conducting digital media research among youth.

STSM Title: The Impact of Social Media Food Content on Youth Mental Health and Eating Behaviour
Start and End Date: 10/08/2025 – 24/08/2025
Grantee: Ana Botchorishvili
Host Institution: Constatine the Philosopher University, Nitra, Slovakia
Home Institution: Tbilisi State Medical University, Georgia
Duration: 15 days
Working Group: WG2

Objectives

The aim of this Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) is to collaborate with researchers at the host university under the supervision of **Prof. Dr. Alexander V. Sirotkin, Dr Sc., from the Department of Zoology and Anthropology** in order to develop and pilot a cross-national survey exploring how food-related content on social media influences young people's mental health and eating behavior. By combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, we aim to create a well-rounded research tool that reflects the digital experiences of youth.

During the two-week visit, the grantee will build on the host institution's expertise in digital behavior and youth mental health to design a survey that is both ethical and relevant. The survey will be piloted among students at the host university to assess clarity, content, and structure. Feedback will be used to refine the tool.

Upon returning to the home institution, Tbilisi State Medical University, the grantee will implement the improved version of the survey with Georgian students. The findings from both countries will support a comparative analysis, offering insight into how digital food content impacts young people's wellbeing in different contexts.

This STSM supports YouthDMH's mission by focusing on youth digital exposure, mental health, and international research cooperation—while also contributing to research capacity-building in an Inclusiveness Target Country.

Activities

The STSM followed a four-stage plan with the focus was on developing and trying out a survey about the effect of food-related social media content on young people's eating and mental well-being. This elaborated on research that is part of the grantee's PhD thesis, which is was being conducted at the host university and the grantee's official co-supervisor for the doctoral project.

The limited research infrastructure in Georgia, made this study difficult to conduct at home, and therefore, working directly with my supervisor in person was essential. His involvement helped refine the methodology and make stronger the overall quality of the project. The STSM gave me access to valuable resources and expert support that I could not access at my home university, and it made a real difference in the progress of my research.

The following describe the stages of work:

- Orientation and Theoretical Grounding: the available resources helped with an extensive review of topics such as comparison, digital media, and eating behaviour and lay the groundwork to help outline the theoretical framework for the study.
- Studying the digital environment and creating a plan: Social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook were examined in order to better understand popular food-related content and how it impacts youth. Based on these insights, a survey tool was drafted, combining multiple-choice and open-ended questions. The PHQ-4 to assess mental health status was also included. ethical considerations were considered with the host team.
- Tool Development and Pilot Testing: the tool was piloted with university students and other young people outside university. Feedback helped improve question clarity and structure, and

input from the further refined the tool. Lab activities introduced the grantee to biological aspects of nutrition-related research, thus adding further details to the study.

Key Outcomes/ Main Achievements

The biggest success of the project was developing and improving a survey tool that connects both theory and real-life experiences. Including structured questions and open-ended ones gave a better understanding not only of what young people do online, but also how it makes them feel. Adding the PHQ-4 was a simple but effective way to link their digital habits with emotional wellbeing. The feedback during the pilot from both university students and other young people was very honest and helpful as it showed which parts of the survey didn't work as expected and guided us in adjusting the wording, tone, and structure to make it clearer and more meaningful.

Taking part in lab activities at the host department really added value to the experience and acted as a reminder that health behaviours, like eating habits, aren't just shaped by media or emotions - they're also closely linked to biological processes. Seeing that up close contributed to a more thorough understanding about how public health and digital culture are connected.

Impact and Follow-Up Activities

The updated version of the survey will be used at the grantee's home institution, Tbilisi State Medical University, where further data collection will take place. Together with the host team, a plan to compare the findings from both countries as part of a joint study is being developed where the team hopes to present the results at a future YouthDMH event or via a co-authored article. Interest in expanding the topic has arisen from both the grantee and host university, where a closer look at how different platforms affect users or exploring gender-related patterns in online food content engagement.

STSM Title: Enhancing Youth-Centred Autism and Cerebral Palsy Therapy in an ITC Context: An Eye-Tracking Collaboration Between KU Leuven and Heimerer Multidisciplinary Center
Start and End Date: 28/07/2025 – 08/08/2025
Grantee: Shqiponjë Ahmedi
Host Institution: KU Leuven (PI Neurorehabilitation Technology Lab, Department of Rehabilitation Sciences)
Home Institution: Heimerer Multidisciplinary Centre, Kosovo
Duration: 12 days
Working Group: WG3

Objectives

This Short-Term Scientific Mission aims to foster interdisciplinary collaboration between the Heimerer Multidisciplinary Center (Qendra Terapeutike Heimerer) in Kosovo and KU Leuven's Neurorehabilitation Technology Lab research group (Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, KU Leuven campus Bruges) with expertise in eye-tracking technology for communication and computer access in children and youth with neurodevelopmental disorders. Eye-tracking technology is an increasingly important interface for communication and computer access in individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders, offering a non-invasive means of interaction when traditional methods are limited; its effectiveness is supported by a growing body of scientific evidence demonstrating both its feasibility and clinical impact.

Under the supervision of **Prof. Dr. Elegast Monbaliu**, the primary goal was to gain hands-on training in eye-tracking methods used in digital mental health research with youth populations—knowledge that is currently unavailable in the Heimerer Multidisciplinary Center's autism clinic. By participating in live demonstrations, workshops, and experimental sessions at KU Leuven campus Bruges, the aim is to learn how to integrate eye-tracking data into therapeutic strategies in occupational therapy, speech-language therapy, and behavioral interventions. This STSM will contribute directly to YouthDMH's mission by promoting responsible, youth-focused use of digital tools in mental health and enabling capacity-building in an Inclusiveness Target Country.

Activities

The grantee participated in an intensive training and knowledge exchange program hosted by the Neurorehabilitation Technology Lab at KU Leuven (Campus Bruges), with a focus on the application of eye-tracking technology in children and youth with autism and cerebral palsy.

Week 1 began with an in-depth orientation on the use of eye-tracking technologies in clinical and research settings. The grantee was introduced to several eye-tracking systems, including the Tobii PCEye Mini, Tobii X3-120, Tobii Dynavox iPad and the Tobii Pro Lab software suite. Under the expert guidance of Dr. Saranda Bekteshi, the grantee received hands-on training in equipment setup, calibration procedures, and the operation of analysis software. This technical grounding was complemented by applied discussions on the clinical relevance of eye-tracking in neurodivergent populations. I gained a deeper understanding of how gaze data can inform therapeutic goals in speech-language and occupational therapy, particularly in domains such as cognitive engagement, visual attention, and communication. Through guided walkthroughs and video demonstrations of prior sessions, the grantee became familiar with the practical workflow of data collection and interpretation.

Although live data collection was not directly observed, a review of experimental paradigms focused on joint attention and emotion recognition, both of which are critical intervention targets in autism spectrum disorder (ASD), took place. Case studies involving non-verbal individuals with severe motor impairments, which illustrated the unique value of eye-tracking in assessing cognitive and emotional engagement in populations with limited expressive abilities, were also explored.

The work completed during week 1 aid a strong foundation for understanding the technical and therapeutic potentials of eye-tracking and raised critical questions about accessibility, calibration reliability, and ethical use of such tools with vulnerable populations.

Week 2 emphasized ethical and methodological considerations in the application of eye-tracking technologies within clinical settings with engagement in an independent study on key topics such as GDPR-compliant data handling, ethical research practices involving vulnerable populations, and the cross-cultural adaptation of digital tools in therapeutic contexts taking place. These topics were explored through reading materials, case studies, and ongoing discussions with researchers at KU Leuven.

A central focus of the week was exploring Q-Interactive, an iPad-based testing system (Pearson's Neuropsychological tests) for different clinical assessments. I was also introduced to C-BILLT, a language comprehension computer-based instrument for low motor language testing with discussion around the possibility of translation to suit use and validation in Albania. Another focus was the development of a pilot implementation plan for integrating eye-tracking into speech-language and occupational therapy practices at the Heimerer Multidisciplinary Health-Center in Kosovo.

Drawing from both theoretical frameworks and local clinical realities allowed the grantee to contribute to drafting components of the protocol that address contextual feasibility, target populations, and therapeutic relevance. Interdisciplinary discussions with KU Leuven researchers, were ongoing and deepened the grantee's understanding of how eye-tracking technologies can be translated from research settings into practical, culturally responsive clinical interventions. These exchanges provided insight into current challenges and opportunities for implementation in low-resource or transitional healthcare environments.

Key Outcomes/ Main Achievements

A key outcome was the development of a pilot protocol for the use of eye-tracking in speech-language and occupational therapy with autistic and neurodivergent youth in Kosovo. This protocol includes recommendations for device selection, ethical safeguards, therapist training modules, and culturally adapted task designs. The protocol will serve as the foundation for a 6-month internal pilot at Heimerer Multidisciplinary Health-Center, with the long-term goal of launching a full-scale research study pending local ethics approval.

Impact and Follow-Up Activities

The STSM also resulted in the initiation of a collaboration between KU Leuven and Heimerer Multidisciplinary Health-Center with an invitation extended to Dr. Saranda Bekteshi as a keynote speaker in an upcoming 16th International Conference of Health Sciences under the theme "Transforming Models of Care and Therapy: Innovations in Health and Well-being" where she will share her expertise and research on new technologies for children and youth with dyskinetic cerebral palsy, powered wheelchairs with head/foot steering systems and eye-tracking technology.

The possibility to pursue a joint research publication on the translational potential of eye-tracking in resource-constrained clinical settings and to co-develop a grant proposal under the Horizon Europe or COST mechanisms to support broader implementation and scaling of this work will be explored. Furthermore, a dissemination summary will be provided to the YouthDMH network, highlighting lessons learned and practical considerations for introducing high-tech digital mental health tools in under-resourced environments.

This STSM contributed meaningfully to YouthDMH's mission by:

- Building capacity in an ITC clinical center.
- Promoting equity in access to digital tools.
- Strengthening interdisciplinary and cross-country research collaboration.
- Laying the groundwork for sustained youth-centered digital mental health innovation.

STSM Title: Bridging Digital Health, Gaming, and Youth Mental Health: Laying the Groundwork for a Franco-Swedish Research Collaboration
Start and End Date: 25/08/2025 – 30/08/2025
Grantee: Kevin Rebecchi
Host Institution: Uppsala University, Sweden
Home Institution: University Lumiere Lyon 2, France
Duration: 6 days
Working Group: WG3

Objectives

This STSM aims to initiate a research collaboration between the University Lumière Lyon 2 (France) and Uppsala University (Sweden), focusing on the intersections between youth mental health, gaming practices, and access to digital health tools. The applicant, Dr. Kevin Rebecchi (University Lumière Lyon 2), and host **Dr. Josefin Hagström (Uppsala University)** share complementary expertise in developmental psychology, digital media use, and eHealth. Dr. Josefin Hagström is a member of Professor Maria Hägglund's research group Participatory eHealth and Health Data, with a strong track record of international, interdisciplinary collaboration.

The visit will allow the teams to explore conceptual and methodological synergies around how young people (including those who are neurodivergent) engage with entertainment platforms (e.g., video games) and digital health tools (e.g., patient portals), and how these shape mental health outcomes, self-perception, and health literacy.

During the visit, the partners will co-organize a workshop with researchers in Uppsala to identify overlapping themes, potential datasets, and avenues for empirical collaboration, including future co-authored publications and external funding applications. This STSM marks a first step toward building an interdisciplinary, cross-national research agenda on digital ecosystems, health communication, and adolescent well-being, aligned with YouthDMH's aims to foster innovative, inclusive, and policy-relevant mental health research.

Activities

During the STSM at Uppsala University (Department of Women's and Children's Health), the main objective was to develop a cross-disciplinary research agenda at the intersection of digital health, gaming, therapeutic games, and mental health. Over the course of one week, the grantee along with Josefin Hagström (PhD in Health Informatics, researcher at the department of Women's and Children's health), combined presentations, group discussions, and meetings with leading researchers to identify shared interests, methodological frameworks, and potential collaborations.

The visit began with introductions and research presentations from both sides, including discussions with Associate Professor Joshua Juvrud (game design and developmental psychology), Professor Emily Holmes (clinical psychology and mental imagery), Professor Maria Hägglund (digital health and implementation science), researcher Sara Riggare (patient-led innovation and self-care in Parkinson's disease), and several postdoctoral researchers and PhD students (Kharko Anna, Scott Duncan Therese, Dieker Eva). These exchanges helped identify thematic intersections such as children and adolescent digital practices, neurodiversity, health data access, and participatory eHealth. In addition to academic meetings, preparation took place for a follow-up meeting with Sverok, the Swedish national umbrella organization for gaming clubs (55,000 members across 1,700 associations). This collaboration will provide valuable insights into youth gaming practices at the national level and will allow the connection of the research to community-based data sources such as the Swedish media barometer.

Key research questions at the intersection of entertainment and digital health platforms, paying attention to ethical and methodological challenges (privacy, digital autonomy, algorithmic feedback, vulnerable users) were explored, and a review of existing datasets available in Sweden and France to evaluate comparability and feasibility, and discussed the application of motivational design frameworks (e.g., Octalysis) and the analysis of "bright" and "dark" design patterns in health-related games and apps took place.

A multi-study research agenda was sketched to include: (1) case studies of motivational and engagement patterns in games and apps; (2) conceptual and empirical work on neuro-friendly design for mental health; (3) quasi-experimental studies of therapeutic games; (4) surveys and discourse analysis of youth practices around mental health apps; and (5) an updated systematic review of commercial games as resources for mental health.

Time was dedicated to identifying relevant funding opportunities (e.g., Uppsala CIRCUS, Groschinsky Foundation, AFSR fellowships) and to outlining collaborative outputs such as review articles, methodological papers, and joint grant applications

Key Outcomes/ Main Achievements

The STSM successfully achieved its objectives of building a collaborative, interdisciplinary research framework at the crossroads of gaming, mental health, and digital health. The main achievements include:

- Research agenda: We co-constructed a multi-study program combining case studies, conceptual reviews, experimental designs, surveys, and systematic reviews, focusing on how games and apps can both support and challenge mental health, particularly for neurodivergent and vulnerable populations.
- Shared frameworks: We agreed on using motivational design frameworks (Octalysis, dark/bright patterns) as analytical tools across studies.
- Feasibility assessment: We reviewed existing datasets in Sweden and France, identifying gaps and the need for new participatory and mixed-methods approaches.
- Funding and sustainability: We mapped concrete funding opportunities (e.g., Uppsala CIRCUS 2026–2027 network call, Groschinsky Foundation 2026 grants, AFSR fellowships 2026) and set timelines for upcoming applications.
- Collaborative network: We established connections with senior researchers (Holmes, Hägglund, Juvrud, Riggare) as well as postdoctoral and doctoral students, ensuring a sustainable and cross-disciplinary collaboration. A follow-up meeting is also planned with Sverok, a nationwide umbrella organization for gaming clubs in Sweden. This will open possibilities for community-based studies, access to large-scale datasets such as the national media barometer, and engagement with young players and vulnerable groups directly involved in gaming practices.

Impact and Follow-Up Activities

Follow-up activities include co-writing a review paper on neuro-friendly design in mental health apps, preparing a funding application to the Uppsala CIRCUS call (deadline October 2025), and coordinating future empirical studies (surveys, quasi-experiments, case analyses). A digital follow-up meeting was already planned for September 10th to finalize the CIRCUS application. Additional outputs such as conference workshops, training schools, and collaborative PhD supervision are also being considered.

Overall, the STSM created strong synergies between digital health, psychology, implementation science, and game design, fully in line with the COST Action objectives of fostering interdisciplinary and international research collaboration. The mission not only resulted in a shared research roadmap but also laid the foundations for sustainable collaborations and future joint publications.

STSM Title: Digital Interventions in Mental Health for University Students
Start and End Date: 27/07/2025 – 10/08/2025
Grantee: Maria Hillorn
Host Institution: Umeå University, Sweden
Home Institution: University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy
Duration: 15 days
Working Group: WG3

Objectives

The primary objective of this STSM was to deepen knowledge of current research and clinical practices surrounding digital mental health interventions for university students, with a specific focus on Italy's DigiWell project. Comprehensive insight was gained regarding the project's digital framework, operational delivery methods, and its overall impact on student well-being.

Under the supervision of **Prof. Luca Pingani**, a key focus was evaluating the feasibility of implementing the DigiWell methodology in Sweden and other international contexts. By investigating the close structural collaborations between Italian public mental health services and universities, this mission successfully identified the core organizational strategies, opportunities, and systemic challenges inherent in cross-institutional healthcare partnerships.

Activities

Collaborative Meetings & Research Development

The STSM commenced with strategic meetings with host, Prof. Luca Pingani, to examine community mental health frameworks in Italy and the DigiWell project, which explores digital mental health interventions for university students. These discussions focused on systematic review methodology, protocol development, and formulating targeted research questions regarding Virtual Reality (VR) interventions for student mental health. This groundwork successfully fostered relationships for future collaborative research projects.

Further consultations were held with research assistants Anna Ghirardello and Giorgia Polizzotto to evaluate local project outcomes, challenges, and broader psychiatric rehabilitation structures. Discussions with Anna provided valuable insights into Italian integrated teams, regional daily services, and residential facilities.

The DigiWell Project & VR Interventions

Consultations with Giorgia deepened understanding of the DigiWell project's digital framework. The intervention employs a structured, six-meeting protocol delivered via Zoom (both individual and group formats) focusing on positive psychology, daily life challenges, and coping mechanisms. Student feedback has been highly positive, with participants specifically appreciating the digital format and the built-in time for self-reflection.

Giorgia also shared insights into the project's VR intervention, which pairs psychoeducation with positive psychology in everyday virtual settings to build mental health management tools. While student feedback for the VR component remains positive, implementation challenges include high software development costs and technical software bugs. Due to a connectivity malfunction during my stay, the VR equipment could not be tested firsthand but comprehensive knowledge was still gained through deep-dive discussions with the project team.

Clinical Facility Site Visits

To contextualize regional mental health services, site visits were conducted at four specialized facilities, interacting directly with staff and patients:

- Area LAS: A multifaceted psychiatric rehabilitation facility offering daily activities, supported housing, and employment services.

- REMS: A forensic psychiatry residence specialized in treating individuals with severe psychiatric disorders (primarily psychosis and personality disorders) deemed unfit for regular prison.
- DCA: A dedicated treatment facility for eating disorders, primarily serving adolescents and young adults from age 12 upward.
- Il Borgo**:** A rehabilitation facility for young adults (ages 18–30) with psychotic disorders, utilizing evidence-based practices across day programs and housing to promote independent symptom and life management.

Key Outcomes/ Main Achievements

- Community Mental Health**:** Gained a deep understanding of Italy's strong societal integration and dual focus on clinical practice and research in psychiatric rehabilitation. Discussions highlighted innovative outreach via social media (e.g., TikTok) to improve youth mental health literacy and address recruitment challenges.
- DigiWell Evaluation: Both project modalities yielded positive student feedback. While Zoom sessions proved highly valuable for rural or face-to-face-averse students without needing complex tech, the Immersive VR (IVR) component faces high software costs and equipment barriers (HMDs). Transitioning to non-immersive VR offers a scalable, cost-effective alternative for larger groups.

Impact and Follow-Up Activities

- Systematic Review: Protocol formulation has commenced. Developing foundational knowledge of VR modalities allowed for the drafting of three potential review directions for autumn:
    - User experience and usability of VR tools
    - Comparative efficacy across student majors (e.g., healthcare vs. other fields)
    - VR interventions tailored to varying levels of clinical severity
- Sustainability: Strategic foundations were laid with Prof. Pingani, Anna, and Giorgia for future international research. Upcoming collaborative projects will focus on digital mental health tools and comparative cross-national psychiatric rehabilitation, with plans to involve wider Action members.

STSM Title: Barriers and Facilitators to Youth Inclusion as Experts by Design in Digital Mental Health Interventions: A Delphi Study
Start and End Date: 04/08/2025 – 18/08/2025
Grantee: Maria Tibbs
Host Institution: University College Dublin, Ireland
Home Institution: Northumbria University, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK
Duration: 15 days
Working Group: WG1

Objectives

While youth involvement is widely recognised as beneficial in mental health interventions (McCabe et al., 2023; Wong et al., 2010), the specific barriers and facilitators to their inclusion in digital intervention design remain underexplored. To address this gap, the proposed STSM will support the development of a Delphi study focused on identifying these barriers and facilitators.

The STSM will take place over two weeks at the Youth Mental Health Lab, School of Psychology, University College Dublin (UCD), hosted by **Associate Professor Amanda Fitzgerald**, co-lead of WG1 and a recognised expert in Delphi methods and participatory research. The Lab provides an ideal setting, with a strong track record in youth engagement and close links to advisory networks and implementation partners such as Jigsaw – the National Centre for Youth Mental Health (https://jigsaw.ie). I will design the Delphi protocol for pre-registration, prepare an ethics application, and convene the first in-person meeting of an existing Youth Advisory Group (YAG) of youth advocates and researchers affiliated with Jigsaw – the National Centre for Youth Mental Health, a youth mental health organisation in Ireland.

The STSM will also support focused collaboration with COST Action members Amanda Fitzgerald, Charlotte Blease, and Josefin Hagström, and to strengthen my skills in Delphi methodology and co-design, supported by the expertise of Blease and Fitzgerald

Activities

During this two-week visit at the Youth Mental Health Lab, University College Dublin along with Professor Fitzgerald, attention was focused on the preparatory and collaborative work required to launch the Delphi study on youth inclusion in digital mental health intervention design. A major task was preparing and submitting an ethics application for the first researcher workshop that will be held in September in Porto. Alongside this, collaboration with colleagues developed a detailed workshop plan, including a pre-workshop survey and supporting materials.

Dissemination and collaboration activities were also initiated and co-authoring an opinion piece for journal submission, which aims to foreground the rationale for youth inclusion as “experts by design” in digital intervention development, began. In parallel, organisation of the first pan-European meeting of COST Action to convene members interested in contributing to the Delphi study, providing a platform to clarify roles and identify co-leads for specific elements of the project commenced.

Significant progress was made on youth engagement. With input from colleagues and group members’ networks, we mapped out potential youth organisations to invite into the process. This work will directly support recruitment for the upcoming workshops with young people, to further feed into the Delphi item generation. While the initial plan was to convene a youth advisory group during the schedule visit, discussions with the wider group highlighted the importance of pan-European representation. As a result, the advisory group model was revised to include young people from across EU member states, rather than being concentrated in Ireland, to ensure broader relevancy and representation.

Key Outcomes/ Main Achievements

The STSM achieved most of its planned goals outlined in the initial application, as well as advancing additional milestones that emerged through collaborative meetings during the research visit. Key achievements include:

- Preparation and submission of an ethics application to UCD Human Research Ethics Committee for the upcoming researcher and PPI expert workshop scheduled for September 11th, 2025.
- Drafting of a co-authored opinion piece for journal submission outlining the core issues dominating the area of meaningful youth involvement in digital youth mental health intervention research.
- Convening the first COST Action pan-European meeting, where roles and contributes to the overall Delphi project were outlined and agreed upon.
- Planning of workshop to be held in Porto on September 11th, 2025, including structure, materials, and pre-workshop surveys.
- Initiating outreach to youth organisations through member networks to support the recruitment of young people across Europe to advise on the design and delivery of the Delphi study.

Impact and Follow-Up Activities

- Circulation of pre workshop survey and materials one week in advance of the researcher and PPI expert workshop.
- Delivery of the researcher and PPI expert workshops in Porto on September 11th.
- Submission of ethics applications for follow-up youth workshops to identify, from young people's perspectives, the core issues and challenges to participation and to review the list generated by researchers and PPI experts.
- Recruitment of young people from across Europe to take part in the Delphi and pre-Delphi workshop.
- Development of an umbrella review of reviews to synthesise existing evidence on youth inclusion in digital mental health intervention research.
- Submission of opinion piece for publication.
- Continued scheduled monthly meetings of the pan-European group to coordinate and guide the Delphi process.
- A planned visit to Upsala, Sweden, to meet with two of the core members (Charlotte Blease and Josefin Hagström) to encourage further collaboration and advance current body of work.
- Submission of symposium proposal to IAYMH 2026 on youth participation in digital youth mental health intervention research.
- Conduct of the Delphi study, which will focus on reaching consensus across stakeholder groups on the most critical barriers and facilitators, as well as identifying actionable solutions

STSM Title: Digital Mental Health for Young People (YouthDMH)
Start and End Date: 18/08/2025 – 22/08/2025
Grantee: Ortenca Kotherja
Host Institution: University of Twente, Netherlands
Home Institution: Aleksander Xhuvani University Elbasan, Albania
Duration: 5 days
Working Group: WG1

Objectives

This STSM was conducted at the University of Twente, Netherlands, from August 18–22, 2025, and hosted by the 'Engaging Digital Health Interventions' research group led by **Dr. Saskia Kelders**. The main purpose of the STSM was to enhance the grantee's knowledge and research skills in the field of digital mental health, with a particular focus on inclusion, youth engagement, and interdisciplinary innovation—core themes within the YouthDMH COST Action (CA23153) and Working Group 1.

As a young researcher and lecturer at the University of Tirana, the grantee was committed to exploring how digital tools can be designed and implemented in ways that are ethically grounded, culturally inclusive, and responsive to the diverse needs of young people. Her current work was focused on the investigation of how digital mental health interventions can better serve underrepresented youth and promote equal access to mental health care through innovative and participatory approaches.

This STSM facilitated Collaboration with leading researchers in the interdisciplinary space of digital health and behavioural sciences, enhanced the Exploration of best practices for involving young people meaningfully in the co-design of mental health technologies, and examined strategies for reducing digital inequalities in mental health care access. It also deepened the grantee's methodological skills in qualitative research, literature synthesis, and instrument validation while contributing to the development of cross-cutting frameworks that address youth mental health across disciplines and sectors

Activities

The Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) at the University of Twente focused on defining a core research question regarding meaningful youth involvement in co-designing digital mental health technologies through a collaborative "umbrella review" framework. Methodological advancement centered on qualitative research, literature synthesis, and instrument validation, specifically looking at standardizing tools to reduce digital health inequalities. Key operational tasks included adhering to faculty ethical codes for data collection, utilizing questionnaires and interviews, and training in advanced data analysis software (ATLAS.ti, SPSS, and RStudio). Additionally, the visit involved evaluating specialized digital mental health platforms (Minddistrict and TheRapieland) and engaging in regular cross-sectoral department meetings to co-create academic literature.

- Methodological Training & Tool Standardization: Investigating strategies to adapt, validate, and standardize qualitative and quantitative research instruments to fit specific national or local urban contexts, ensuring ethical compliance and participant consensus.
- Platform Evaluation & Data Analysis: Reviewing the operational frameworks of digital mental health platforms (Minddistrict and TheRapieland) while applying ATLAS.ti for qualitative interview coding and SPSS/RStudio for statistical questionnaire processing.
- Interdisciplinary Synthesis & Co-Creation: Merging insights from psychology, technology, sociology, and education through a multidisciplinary "Health Research Theory and Development" approach to design inclusive youth interventions.
- Manuscript Development: Collaborating closely with Assoc. Prof. Saskia Kelders to draft, refine, and co-author a comprehensive, peer-reviewed summary research article addressing youth mental health challenges.

Key Outcomes/ Main Achievements

This experience guided the grantee in her own research and offered insight into how to develop similar activities in cooperation with different departments within her home university, with a particular focus on inclusion, youth engagement, and interdisciplinary innovation to support and humanize community

efforts. Such activities involve both university lecturers and students, fostering a culture of social responsibility and encouraging collaboration across disciplines.

Impact and Follow-Up Activities

The development of the STSM helped the grantee strengthen her professional skills through close collaboration with colleagues at the international level while also providing an opportunity to fully engage in research work as part of Working Group 1 (WG1), focusing on inclusion, youth engagement, and interdisciplinary innovation.

STSM Title: Gaming Addiction and Motivation Evaluation System: A Youth-Centred Model for Understanding Digital Well-being and Rish Behaviours
Start and End Date: 22/08/2025 – 31/08/2025
Grantee: Mustafa Can Gurseli
Host Institution: Universidade Lusofona, Portugal
Home Institution: Università degli Studi di Firenze. Italy
Duration: 10 days
Working Group: WG3

Objectives

Digital environments have become central to young people's daily lives, with video games playing a particularly important role in shaping how youth interact, socialize, and manage emotions. Although gaming can support creativity, cognitive stimulation, and social connectedness, the growing prevalence of problematic video game use-particularly among adolescents and young adults-raises critical concerns about digital mental health. In recognition of this, the World Health Organization has formally recognised “gaming disorder” in the International Classification of Diseases - 11, highlighting the need for clearer evidence on behavioural risks in digital environments.

Existing approaches to regulating gaming behaviour, such as the Pan-European Game Information system, focus primarily on static content (e.g. violence, explicit language), often overlooking the psychological and motivational dimensions that drive long-term or addictive engagement. Studies have shown that intrinsic and extrinsic gaming motivations, such as escapism, achievement, social connection, and immersion, may serve as underlying predictors of addictive-like behaviors. These motivations are particularly relevant in adolescent populations.

This project, supervised by **Carla Sousa** (Integrated Researchers at CICANT- Centre for Research in Applied Communication, Culture, and New Technologies**),** builds on the recent study by Gursesli et al.2, which proposed a comprehensive 12-dimensional model of gaming motivations, to explore the extent to which specific motivational patterns are associated with gaming addiction, digital life balance, and well-being among young people aged 18-25. To capture the complexity of digital behavior among adolescents, this project will also integrate the Digital Life Balance Scale3, a validated instrument that assesses perceived harmony between online and offline life. In addition, well-being outcomes will be measured using the Flourishing Scale4 and the Satisfaction with Life Scale, providing a holistic view of how gaming motivations influence not only addiction risk, but also mental health and life satisfaction. Gaming addiction itself will be measured using the validated Gaming Addiction Scale6, allowing for a direct assessment of problematic gaming behaviour in adolescents.

Activities

During the STSM, the main activities focused on the preparation, cleaning, and scoring of the dataset collected from Italy within the scope of the G.A.M.E.S. project. The dataset included several validated instruments: the Psychological Motivations for Playing Video Games Scale (PMPVGs; Gursesli, 2024), the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, 1985), the Flourishing Scale (FS; Diener et al., 2010), and the Digital Life Balance Scale (DLB; Duradoni, 2022). These instruments were selected to provide a comprehensive assessment of gaming motivations, psychological well-being, and the perceived harmony between digital and offline life. This composition ensured coverage across a wide age range while maintaining a primary focus on youth and young adults, who are the central target population of the project.

The first stage of the work was dedicated to data cleaning. This included the identification and removal of incomplete responses, verification of data consistency, and handling of outliers to ensure high-quality input for subsequent analysis. Once the dataset was prepared, scoring protocols were applied to compute indices for each of the instruments. In particular, the 12 motivational dimensions of the PMPVGs (Creativity, Boredom, Challenge/Mastery, Competition, Mood/Stress, Diversion, Entertainment, Escapism, Fantasy/Immersion, Habit, Social, and Self-esteem) were calculated. The same procedure was applied to the SWLS, FS, and DLB scales to obtain standardized scores across all measures. After scoring, descriptive statistics were calculated for all instruments. This included means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum values, and frequency distributions where

appropriate. These descriptive statistics provided a clear overview of the data and served as the foundation for further analyses.

Following this stage, the analytic framework was set up for exploring the associations between gaming motivations, psychological well-being, and digital life balance. Correlation analysis applied to examine the relationships between motivational dimensions and outcome measures. Linear regression models were then applied to identify which specific motivational dimensions could predict well-being indicators and digital life balance outcomes. These models provided a structured way to test direct associations between the independent variables (gaming motivations) and the dependent variables (well-being and balance measures). In addition to the work on the Italian dataset, a further activity during the STSM was the validation of the PMPVGs in the Portuguese context. This step included preparing the dataset, scoring procedures, and conducting initial statistical checks to ensure that the instrument functioned appropriately with the Portuguese sample. This process will allow future comparative analyses to be carried out with confidence across both cultural contexts

Key Outcomes/ Main Achievements

The STSM achieved its planned goals by completing the cleaning, scoring, and analysis of the Italian dataset and initiating the Portuguese validation of the PMPVGs. The dataset included PMPVGs, SWLS, FS, and DLB, providing a broad assessment of gaming motivations, psychological well-being, digital balance, and the prediction of which gaming motivations are associated with healthier or less healthy patterns of video game use.

After cleaning and scoring, descriptive statistics were calculated, followed by correlation and regression analyses. The correlation analyses showed significant associations between specific motivational dimensions and well-being measures.

Regression analyses further clarified these relationships. For FS, the overall model was significant, indicating that motivational dimensions explained around 20% of the variance. Escapism were significant negative predictors, highlighting their association with reduced flourishing and therefore with less healthy engagement. For DLB, the regression model was also significant explaining around 26% of the variance. Diversion and Mood/Stress emerged as significant negative predictors, indicating that these motivations may contribute to unhealthy patterns of digital life imbalance.

In addition to these analyses, the Portuguese validation of the PMPVGs was carried out. This included confirmatory factor analysis and reliability testing. Since the outputs are too extensive to present here, they have been included as a supplementary file. These outcomes demonstrate that the STSM successfully met its objective of identifying motivational dimensions associated with well-being and digital imbalance, as well as predicting which gaming motivations are linked to unhealthy use patterns. The contribution to Action deliverables is evident in the production of a cleaned and validated dataset, methodological frameworks for analysis, and empirical evidence connecting gaming motivations with psychological outcomes.

Impact and Follow-Up Activities

Planned dissemination has already been outlined. The correlation and regression findings will be submitted as a paper to the Videojogos 2025 Conference (https://videojogos2025.ipmaia.pt/#top), which will take place in December and will be published in Scopus-indexed proceedings. The validation results from the Portuguese dataset are planned to be submitted as a separate journal article. Future collaborations with Universidade Lusófona will focus on completing the Portuguese dataset analyses, conducting cross-cultural comparisons between Italy and Portugal, and refining predictive models. These next steps will support the development of evidence-based tools for early identification of at-risk gaming profiles.

CLOSING SECTION

04

Conclusion

The Short-Term Scientific Missions undertaken during the first year of YouthDMH have provided an important foundation for scientific collaboration and research capacity building within the Action. Through exchanges between home and host institutions, researchers gained access to specialist expertise, research methods and resources, while contributing to the scientific priorities of the YouthDMH Working Groups. The missions also strengthened international research networks and created opportunities for continued collaboration between institutions and researchers across participating countries.

The Year One missions supported a diverse range of research activities addressing key aspects of young people's digital mental health. These included the development of systematic review protocols, research into social media use and young people's wellbeing, the development and piloting of research instruments, and the exploration of digital technologies such as eye-tracking in therapeutic contexts involving young people with neurodevelopmental conditions. Other missions focused on digital mental health interventions, gaming motivations and digital wellbeing, as well as youth participation in digital mental health research. These activities contributed to ongoing Working Group tasks and laid the groundwork for future research outputs, collaborative publications and joint research initiatives.

Beyond their immediate scientific contributions, the STSMs strengthened connections between researchers and institutions across participating countries. They provided opportunities for early-career researchers to develop methodological and research skills, receive expert guidance and establish international contacts. Participation from Inclusiveness Target Countries also supported the Action's objectives of promoting geographical inclusion and broadening access to research expertise and collaboration.

Acknowledgements

YouthDMH acknowledges the Pawel W. Wozniak, the Grant Awarding Coordinator for his contribution and support to the Action's Short-Term Scientific Missions programme. Special thanks are also extended to Jennifer Kelly for her contributions to the preparation of this report.

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COST acknowledgement: This report is based upon work from COST Action CA23153, supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology).

COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is a funding agency for research and innovation networks. Our Actions help connect research initiatives across Europe and enable scientists to grow their ideas by sharing them with their peers. This boosts their research, career and innovation.

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