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The European Center for Social Science, Culture and Sport organized the Town Twinning event entitled "MIND – Cross-Cultural Mental Health Exchange" as part of the CERV Program. The event took place in Imathia on May 17th – 19th, 2026.

The "MIND – Cross-Cultural Mental Health Exchange" initiative, a flagship Town Twinning event funded under the European Union's Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) Program, was successfully hosted by the European Center for Social Science, Culture and Sport (EQUALINE). Taking place from May 17th to May 19th, 2026, this landmark event brought together a vibrant transnational consortium of municipalities, non-governmental organizations, mental health professionals, policy experts, and European citizens to address mental well-being and social inclusion as a shared democratic priority. The collaborative effort aimed to cross cultural barriers, dismantle the social stigma surrounding mental health, and strengthen community resilience and cohesion in a post-crisis Europe.

The partner consortium spanned five European countries, highlighting a unified international commitment to equity and local support. This specialized network includes second-level local government bodies and the civil society organizations representing them, featuring EQUALINE representing the Municipality of Veroia (Greece) as the project coordinator, Association Danube 1245 (Serbia), Comune di Soriano nel Cimino (Italy), Obshtina Strumyani (Bulgaria), and Comuna Victoria representing Iasi (Romania). The event itinerary seamlessly blended structural policy analysis, specialized workshops, and immersive cultural sharing, building a linear progression from academic dialogue to community-led solidarity.

The initiative commenced on the afternoon of May 17th, 2026, as international delegations arrived and participants were warmly welcomed. In the evening, the consortium gathered for a convivial welcome dinner to taste Greek delicacies and traditional dishes. This initial evening layout allowed participants from diverse sociocultural backgrounds to bond over traditional regional cuisine, establishing an open, inclusive environment that sets a cooperative tone for the analytical and sensitive topics scheduled for the subsequent days.

On May 18th, 2026, the core working sessions transitioned into the historic Naoussa Centre of Industrial Heritage – ERIA. Following registrations and welcome coffee, the institutional proceedings were formally opened by Mrs. Emily Fountzoula, an International and European Studies graduate and EU Project Manager. Mrs. Fountzoula delivered an opening address that framed the critical context of the CERV Town Twinning framework, followed by structured three-minute institutional greetings from each of the five participating official organizations. The morning program then advanced into three sequentially designed thematic plenary sessions.

The first plenary session, focused on anxiety, loneliness, and social exclusion, was led by Mrs. Stella Ntouvi, a licensed Psychologist and EU Project Manager. This session used clinical insights and Eurostat data to analyze emotional well-being in contemporary, rapidly changing societies, emphasizing the vital role of grassroots community support systems and specialized local care structures in mitigating the psychological isolation of vulnerable groups such as youth and the elderly.

The second session, centered on media and mental health awareness, was moderated by journalist and EU Project Manager Mrs. Alexandra Pavlou. This session parsed the acute risks associated with digital culture, algorithmic information environments, and information overload, focusing on how digital platforms can be transformed from spaces of anxiety into inclusive tools that elevate health literacy, amplify advocacy, and actively combat institutional stigma.

The third session connected mental health as a social and democratic priority, facilitated by Political Scientist and EU Project Manager Mr. Christodoulos Archontis. Mr. Archontis connected psychological resilience to active European citizenship, illustrating that civic participation and healthy democratic discourse rely inherently on the mental stability and social inclusion of the population.

Following these presentations, Mrs. Emily Fountzoula coordinated a closing remarks session summarizing key cross-border policy insights. The intensive midday sessions concluded with an official lunch celebrating local culinary heritage. In the evening, delegates reconvened for a formal social dinner and networking event, facilitating additional intermunicipal policy debates and planning for future project continuations.

On May 19th, the event wrapped up with participants reflecting on their MIND Twinning Exchange experience and exploring ways to build on what they learned. Attendees shared personal insights, highlighted key takeaways and discussed strategies to advance mental health awareness and social inclusion

back home. Finally, closing conversations focused on maintaining long-term collaboration between partner organizations and strengthening the relationships built throughout the exchange.

Across all scheduled sessions, the MIND agenda created a specialized environment where municipal administrative strategies met the lived experiences of civil society operators. By adhering to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) guidelines and non-discrimination principles, the consortium systematically integrated gender-sensitive and disability-accessible frameworks into its evaluations. The resulting outputs, ranging from participant-driven guidelines to a robust cross-border network for long-term psychological support, mark an ambitious progression beyond the status quo of conventional healthcare models. As the partner delegations from Greece, Serbia, Italy, Bulgaria, and Romania return to their respective municipalities, they carry forward the methodologies, toolkits, and inspiration needed to cultivate a more inclusive, compassionate, and mentally resilient European Union.