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MeetingDem Newsletter

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First results of the MeetingDem project

With three festive and inspiring final conferences in Italy, Poland and the United Kingdom the MeetingDem project came to an official end. But of course the existing Meeting Centres continue, and with many organisations interested in setting up a meeting centre the further expansion across Europe and beyond continues as well. In the last months all consortium partners have been working hard on the final data analysis for evaluation of the implementation process, effectiveness, cost-effectiveness and user satisfaction of the Meeting Centres Support Programme in the three partner countries Italy, Poland and the UK. We can already say the results are very promising! You can read more about the MeetingDem project achievements in this newsletter.



[Presenters and delegates of the Final Wroclaw \(Poland\) MeetingDem conference at the launch of the film on the Polish Meeting Centres](#)

Project achievements and main conclusions

15 Meeting Centres were successfully established in Italy (8), Poland (3) and the UK (2), of which 9 were involved in the data collection for the evaluation studies.

Evaluation of the adaptive implementation of Meeting Centres Support Programme (MCSP) showed first that although overall the core programme elements and vision of MCSP were maintained in the three countries, country specific requirements resulted in variations between countries with regard to inclusion criteria for participants of MCSP; e.g. frequency of the offered programme components; culture specific activities offered in the Meeting Centres; background and education level of personnel; and funding and governance. Secondly, the study provided insight into factors that had influenced the implementation of MCSP. Factors that facilitated the preparation of the implementation in all countries were: added value of MCSP over usual care, matching the needs of the target group and enthusiasm of local stakeholders. General barriers were: competition with care and welfare organizations and scarce funding.

The step-by-step implementation method proved feasible and efficacious for all countries. In the next phases of implementation (the execution and continuation phase) the main facilitators and barriers appeared related to the presence of suitable staff, management and a project manager. The fact that MCSP is attuned to the needs and wishes of people with dementia and informal caregivers appeared a strong facilitator for successful implementation of MCSP both on a user and organisational level as well as funding level. Main differences between countries were related to communication with potential refer-

rers, setting up an inter-organizational collaboration network, receiving support of national parties, having clear discharge criteria for MCSP and continuous PR in the region.

The effect evaluation showed that compared to usual care in the three countries MCSP was more effective in improving the quality of life of the participants with dementia, more specifically their feelings of belonging, self-esteem and positive affect. In addition some positive trends were seen in depression and higher attendance to the Meeting Center appeared associated with less neuropsychiatric symptoms (agitation, aggression) in the person with dementia. In Italy positive effects were found on the mental health of caregivers and they felt less distress due to neuropsychiatric symptoms of the person with dementia. Overall, in the three countries, caregivers felt less burdened after 6 months of participation in MCSP.

Regarding the cost-effectiveness it was found that benefits were achieved in quality of life for people with dementia by MCSP compared to usual care and that these benefits are associated with additional costs. If MCSP is cost-effective depends on the willingness of the society to pay for the additional costs.

The user evaluation demonstrated a high degree of satisfaction of MC users. Almost all persons with dementia judged positively regarding the atmosphere in the Meeting Centres and the attitude of the personnel towards them. Caregivers' participation in and satisfaction of the different elements of the caregiver programme was high and their satisfaction even increased over time. Qualitative data from focus groups underlined that MCSP provides an important means for social and emotional interaction.

MeetingDem National Conferences

Italy

The title of the first national symposium in the MEETINGDEM Project we organized in Milan was: 'Meeting Centres For People with Dementia and their Caregivers: Italian and European experiences in comparison'. It took place on 19th January 2017, at Don Gnocchi Foundation, IRCCS S. Maria Nascente, in Milan. The principal aims of this event were to spread the philosophy and the approach of the Meeting Center Support Programme (MCSP) and to illustrate the first results of MEETINGDEM Project. The speakers were the project leader (Prof. Dröes), representatives from the other European project partners (Prof. Rymaszewska from Poland, Dr. Simon Evans from the UK and Joke Bos

from the Netherlands), the Italian referents (Dr. Farina for Milan and Prof. Chattat for Bologna) and two researchers involved (Dr. Saibene and Dr. d'Arma). We also invited to talk about their experience the MC coordinator and the referent of the legal clinic that was opened in the two Milan Meeting Centers, representatives of the local authorities (Municipality of Milan) and of the Don Gnocchi Foundation, of the Initiative Group, of the volunteers and of the users of MC (people with dementia and family members).



Symposium participants

Around 100 people took part in the event, both those directly involved in or close to dementia but also people interested in this innovative psychosocial approach addressed to people with dementia and their caregiver. The atmosphere was very enthusiastic and we observed an active participation by all present.

By Francesca Saibene and Alessia D'Arma, Fondazione Don Carlo Gnocchi – Onlus, MeetingDem team Italy

Poland

The final MeetingDem symposium in Poland took place on 27-28 February 2017 in Wroclaw. During those two days we summarised the MeetingDem project and celebrated its official end. On Monday, all conference participants could visit the 1st Meeting Centre on Ciepła Street in Poland. It was an opportunity to meet people with dementia and their carers attending Meeting Centre, talk to therapists and coordinators or even participate in some of activities. Our international guests shared their experience with Meeting Centres in the Netherlands, Italy and the United Kingdom. Prof. Rose-Marie Dröes – MeetingDem project leader – explained the idea of Meeting Centre Support Programme and prof. Rabih Chattat

from Bologna and Dr Simon Evans from the UK presented the Meeting Centres from their countries. The second day of the conference took part at the Wroclaw Medical University where all researchers and professionals were discussing the MeetingDem project's first results and sharing knowledge about good practice in dementia care in Poland and Europe.



[Premiere of film on Polish Meeting Centres](#)

The conference ended with the premiere of the movie about the Meeting Centre in Poland (directed by Sylwester Stepień) in Wroclaw's cinema. It was a great and touching moment for Meeting Centre users, their families and all people engaged in the MeetingDem project.

By Katarzyna Urbanska, Wroclaw Medical University, MeetingDem Team Poland

UK

Nearly 200 people attended the UK MeetingDem National Conference on Tuesday the 21st March 2017 at the University Arena in Worcester.

The main purpose of the conference was to present the key findings from the MeetingDem project for the first time in the UK and to reflect on how this evidence-based innovation for supporting people with dementia and their families could become part of the dementia care pathway in the UK.

The morning session was chaired by Professor Dawn Brooker. Partners from the Netherlands, Poland, Italy and the UK presented their results. Also in the morning were interviews with the Droitwich Spa and Leominster Meeting Centre managers. Ginnie Jaques, Services Manager in Herefordshire for Alzheimer's Society, said: "The Leominster Meeting Centre is very inclusive and brings family and community together. I feel it helps the person keep connected to their community. The engagement with the centre has grown

and now it is part of the town. It enables everyone to feel equal and accept support."

One of the many highlights of the day was a panel interview and discussion with Meeting Centre members. One Leominster man, who attends a Meeting Centre, said: "It wouldn't be over-dramatic to say it saved my life. When I was diagnosed, I thought what am I going to do? From the word go, it was just right. People were welcoming, there were projects and things to do. The alternative for me would be to sit at home on my own. It's a no-brainer."

The afternoon session was chaired by Jeremy Hughes Chief Executive of the Alzheimer's Society. Delegates engaged in lively round table discussions around a range of propositions relating to Meeting Centres, including their relationship to dementia care pathways, housing and extra care and the dementia care pathway.



[Dawn Brooker \(Project leader of MeetingDem in the UK\) and Jeremy Hughes \(Chief Executive of Alzheimer Society UK\) with presenters and delegates](#)

Professor Dawn Brooker has called for the service to be rolled out across towns in the UK and become part of the standardised care pathway for people with dementia.

She said: "There has been a tendency in the UK to build services at scale that cover ever wider geographical areas or to assume that home-based support with web-based connectivity will provide people with all they need. Meeting Centres are local, friendly and connect people to each other and to their sense of community. Our research shows hard evidence that this brings benefit to people compared to the usual care.

By MeetingDem team UK

Publications in the MeetingDem project

In the last months of the project four interesting papers have been published: the study protocol of the MeetingDem project, two papers about (the different phases of) the implementation of the Meeting Centres and a paper about MCSP supporting people in adjusting to change based on the Adaptation-Coping Model. The links to these and earlier publications about the Meeting Centres can be found on our website. Publications on the results of the evaluation studies are expected later on in 2017 and the beginning of 2018. (www.meetingdem.eu/publications/publicatons-non-mcsp/).

Meeting Centres expanding across Europe and Beyond

During the MeetingDem project a worldwide network of interest was created of people and organisations who are interested in setting up Meeting Centres in their own country and region. Several initiatives to set up new meeting centres are undertaken in Italy, Poland and the UK. Also in Spain preparations are made for setting up Meeting Centres in the regions of Salamanca and Zamora. In a previous newsletter we mentioned the preparation of a first Meeting centre in Hei Fe in China, which opened their doors in April 2017. Recently, also in Sidney Australia plans are made and funding acquired to set up Meeting Centres.

Want to set up a Meeting Centre yourself?

On our website (www.meetingdem.eu) under Work Packages & Deliverables you may find the deliverables resulting from the MeetingDem project, such as a checklist of facilitators and barriers to setting up a Meeting Centre (WP3), implementation plans for setting up a Meeting Centre (WP4) and examples of promotion materials such as flyers and a FAQ document (WP4). These deliverables can all be very helpful when setting up a new Meeting Centre.

Where to find the Meeting Centres in Europe?

For contact details and more information on the Meeting Centres in the different EU countries, we invite you to visit our website www.meetingdem.eu.

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For more information about the MeetingDem project please visit our website www.meetingdem.eu, or send an e-mail to: meetingdem.eu@gmail.com.