



...at the end of life

Newsletter 4

December 2023

Loss and Grief in Discussion at the mid-term Conference "Life: When the End Justifies a Beginning"

On November 21st, the transnational conference "Life: When the End Justifies a Beginning" took place in Portugal as part of the Hold My Hand project, co-funded by the Erasmus+ program. The event was organized by the Portuguese partner, Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa, which is part of the transnational consortium of the project. The mission of the project is to promote and develop a culture around end-of-life support.

The conference featured a diverse panel of speakers from Portuguese (SCML), Swedish (Elderberry), Italian (Anziani e Non Solo), and Belgian (UNESSA) organizations.

Ana Jorge, the institution's president, opened the conference and, in her speech, emphasized the importance of reflecting on the theme of end-of-life, taking into account the different experiences and sensitivities of those who have experienced some form of loss.



"As a person, a healthcare professional, I have dedicated a lot of attention and reflection to this topic. Some time ago, Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa published a book called 'And Everything Changes in an Instant.' And indeed, life changes in an instant, ours or those close to us. We are continuously challenged to deal with the issues of loss and grief. But loss and grief are not just about death," she added. She further stated, "Everyone has the right to have quality life from the beginning until the end, because the quality of life is built at birth, at death, and throughout life."

Ana Jorge also considered this a topic that the institution should discuss, as the core mission of Santa Casa is to support the most vulnerable in their various phases throughout life. In reference to the program's name, Hold My Hand, she highlighted the importance of reaching out to others: "We all need someone to hold our hand at certain times in life. We have to be available to others, not in time but in quality. Sometimes, our presence alone, without words, just holding hands is enough."

Also, in connection with this matter, the urgency of training more humanized healthcare professional teams and breaking the taboo around death was emphasized during the "real testimony" by Alexandra Costa, one of the event organizers and a psychologist at the SCML's Rainha D. Leonor Integrated Continued Care Unit.



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The presentation panel of the Hold My Hand project included four speakers representing each of the partner countries. They not only presented the project but also engaged in interactive dynamics with the participants. Significant contributions were obtained, which will be considered in the development of the e-learning platform, expected to be operational from April 2024.

Throughout the day, various themes were presented, keeping a motivated audience of about 150 participants, including formal caregivers (doctors, nurses, psychologists, social workers, etc.) and informal caregivers (family members, volunteers, and personal assistants)

[Click here for more photos](#)

This emotional and challenging day ended with a performance by the young people from the therapeutic theater group of the W+ health unit of SCML. Their play, titled "Dive in Apnea," addressed the themes of grief and loss.

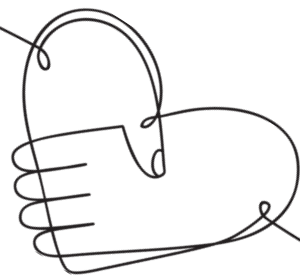
The partners gathered on the day following the event to analyze results, evaluate the event, and plan for the next steps.

The Hold My Hand Team invites you to review some of the highlights of the Mid Term Conference

[Click to watch the video.](#)



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The partnership implementing Hold my Hand:

- Anziani e non solo (ANS) - Italian
- Elderberry - Swedish
- Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa (SCML) - Portuguese
- Unessa - Belgian/ leader partner

Project objectives:

- To work on the development of a culture that addresses the issue of end-of-life support with full awareness
- To produce socio-pedagogical tools for the adult population to help them address the issue of the end of life with their families and health professionals
- Facilitate the transmission of information between the person, his or her family and friends, and health care institutions and facilities

Next meetings :

April 2024 : Transnational partnership meeting

May - June 2024 : Local events to discover the e-learning platform

September 2024 : Transnational final conference

To learn more about the project and to download the results visit the website

<https://hold-my-hand.eu/>



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