



EPA GAINING EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME REPORT

On the observership at the *“Budapest, HUNGARY – North-Buda Saint John Central Hospital,
Department of Psychiatry and Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Teaching Department of Semmelweis
University, Baby-Mother-Father Unit”*

Realised *“from 1st September to 15th October”*

By *“Claudia Malavolta”*

My observership at the hosting institution was a valuable and informative experience, meeting my expectations in most aspects and without encountering any significant problems. The programme was very well structured, and the entire staff was consistently welcoming and supportive.

My placement had a clear clinical and scientific focus on perinatal mental health. The most valuable aspect of my observership was the opportunity to deepen my knowledge in this specialised field, which is still limited in my home country. During my stay, I was able to observe a wide range of clinical interventions, particularly within the Baby–Mother–Father Programme, which I found especially inspiring. This unit represents an innovative and unique model in Central and Eastern Europe, providing modern, guideline-based, and integrated care for mothers with mental disorders, infants with regulatory difficulties, and their families.

During my observership, I was entrusted with several tasks, such as conducting consultations in English with mothers experiencing mental health difficulties and observing their interactions with infants showing regulatory problems. This hands-on experience allowed me to gain practical insights into the therapeutic approaches used in specialist perinatal mental health services. It strengthened my clinical and communication skills, increased my confidence in engaging with this specific patient population.

The programme was highly inclusive, and I was consistently involved in meetings, ward rounds, non-verbal group therapy sessions, and psychiatric consultations. The staff ensured that I could fully participate, making me feel welcomed and supported throughout. I communicated and interacted with all the professional staff at the hosting institution, including psychiatrists, pediatricians, psychologists, parent–infant consultants, social workers, nurses, and volunteers. They helped me overcome both language and cultural barriers, enabling me to better understand patients’ conditions and the therapeutic techniques used to support them, while their guidance allowed me to explore this field from multiple perspectives, ultimately developing a comprehensive, 360-degree understanding of perinatal psychiatry.



My contact with my supervisor was excellent. He welcomed me warmly and was always available and attentive throughout my observership. I interacted with him every day, and he guided me in planning my exchange programme, assigning me tasks and involving me in various activities, as well as facilitating connections with other staff members.

On my last day of observership, I had the opportunity to give a presentation about my home institution to the hosting team, followed by a discussion about the differences between our healthcare systems and psychiatric services. This experience was very useful in gaining a different perspective and broadening our professional horizons.

Overall, this programme was extremely valuable for both my professional and personal development. It allowed me to deepen my understanding of perinatal mental health—an essential yet often overlooked area of psychiatry—and to fully appreciate the importance of a holistic, family-centred model of care. Experiencing firsthand how such an approach not only supports mothers' mental health but also strengthens parental bonds, enhances child development, and promotes the well-being of future generations was truly enlightening. I now feel better equipped to recognise and address complex family dynamics with greater awareness, and I am confident that this experience will significantly influence my future clinical practice.

I hope to bring the knowledge and insights gained back to Italy, contribute to the improvement of our healthcare system, and perhaps promote the development of Baby–Mother–Father Programmes or similar units in collaboration with existing centres. I am committed to raising awareness and sensitivity about perinatal mental health in my country and, even in a small way, contributing to positive change within our society.

I am truly grateful for the opportunity to learn within such a specialised and supportive environment, and I am certain that the lessons gained from this experience will continue to guide my professional path in the years to come.

Budapest, 18 October 2025