



## EPA GAINING EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME REPORT

**NOTE: Please feel free to structure your report as you prefer. You may wish to use some of the suggested questions below as a guideline:**

- *How was your observership overall? Did it meet your expectations and why?*
- *Did you feel welcome at the hosting institution?*
- *Were you given particular tasks at the hosting institution, and if so which tasks?*
- *Did your placement have a particular scientific/clinical focus? If so, what focus?*
- *Did you learn something new during your placement?*
- *How useful was this experience for you?*
- *How good was your contact with your supervisor at the hosting institution? How often were you in contact with him/her?*
- *Did you communicate with other staff members of the hosting institution?*
- *Did you make a presentation about your home institution at the hosting institution?*
- *Do you envisage to make a presentation about your observership at your home institution?*
- *Did you encounter any problems during the visit?*

**Recommended length of report:** 1.5-2 pages

On the observership at the Unit of Clinical Psychiatry, Department of Clinical Neurosciences, Università Politecnica delle Marche (Ancona, Italy)  
Realised between 1st Dec and 19th Dec 2025 by Anna Szczegieliak (Poland)

### REPORT:

I chose to apply for an exchange programme at the Unit of Clinical Psychiatry at the Università Politecnica delle Marche in Ancona because it offered the perfect opportunity to delve deeper into areas of psychiatry I am truly passionate about. I was particularly drawn to their expertise in transition psychiatry for young people aged 15-24—a group that still faces many challenges in my home country—as well as the outpatient units for perinatal psychiatry and adult ADHD. My main goal was to learn firsthand how psychiatric care is organised in these areas, focusing on systemic solutions, daily operations, and unique therapeutic approaches that could benefit my own workplace. To my delight, my time in Ancona far surpassed my expectations. Every activity was thoughtfully matched to my interests, and throughout my three-week stay, I was met with unwavering support and genuine enthusiasm from everyone I encountered.

From the very first day, I felt like a valued member of the team. My exchange began with a warm meeting with Professor Volpe, during which we tailored my programme to fit my specific interests. Even before setting foot in Ancona, I was in close contact with Professor Volpe and his team, who patiently answered all my questions—ranging from the programme requirements and my role in departmental activities to the practicalities of settling into a new city. That early connection made me feel welcome long before I arrived. What truly stood out during my stay was the team's remarkable flexibility. Although the exchange followed a clear plan, I was encouraged to voice my interests and was given the freedom to delve deeper into certain areas, whether that meant spending more time at a particular clinic or attending additional therapeutic and psychoeducational



sessions. Their willingness to adapt the programme to my curiosity made the experience uniquely enriching.

This open and inviting atmosphere enabled me to connect with residents, psychiatry specialists, and a variety of mental health professionals, each eager to share their expertise. They patiently walked me through every aspect of care: from how patients are selected for therapy, to the intricacies of outpatient treatment, to the details of documentation. I returned home with a treasure trove of questionnaires, procedures, and materials for patients—all of which, with some adaptation, can enhance the quality of psychiatric care in Poland. One highlight was discovering a well-structured psychoeducation programme for hospitalised patients. These sessions with psychologists aren't just about theoretical knowledge; they include role-playing and practical exercises, equipping patients with real, usable skills. In contrast, back home, psychoeducation is often less formalised and varies widely from patient to patient. Seeing such a cohesive approach was truly inspiring and gave me concrete ideas to implement in my own practice. Despite not speaking Italian, I never felt lost or isolated—every team member went out of their way to bridge the language and cultural gaps. Their kindness and patience made me feel at home and empowered me to connect more deeply with both colleagues and patients. Thanks to their support, I gained fresh insights into patients' experiences and discovered new therapeutic techniques, all while learning to view psychiatry through a more global, compassionate lens.

What truly set the Unit of Clinical Psychiatry at the Università Politecnica delle Marche apart for me was its vibrant spirit of scientific curiosity and growth. The energy in the clinic was palpable—research projects were always in motion, and innovation was part of the daily routine. I was thrilled to be welcomed into weekly meetings where the team passionately debated therapeutic dilemmas and dissected the latest breakthroughs in published research. It was inspiring to see how much emphasis was placed not only on pharmacological treatments, but also on creative non-pharmacological interventions—an area often neglected in traditional hospital settings. I was especially intrigued by the clinic's RPG programme for outpatients, which echoed the pilot project I had championed at my own centre just a year earlier. Being part of such a dynamic, forward-thinking environment made me excited for the future of psychiatric care and eager to bring new ideas back home.

One of the most rewarding aspects of my time in Ancona was the genuine interest Professor Volpe's team showed in my own experiences as a psychiatrist in Poland. I felt like my perspective truly mattered—we exchanged insights not just about Italian systems, but also about the realities of hospital and outpatient care back home. I was invited to join lively discussions about specialist training, the challenges of diagnosing patient groups like adults with ADHD, and the often stark differences in available treatments (some medications, for example, simply aren't accessible in Italy).

My exchange culminated in a presentation I gave for the entire clinic, where I shared a snapshot of mental health in Poland: the numbers, the awareness, and the everyday struggles with the organisation of the basic services. It was eye-opening to compare approaches and statistics—like the staggering 1.4 million sick leave certificates for mental and behavioural disorders issued in Poland in 2023 alone, which translated into 26 million days off work! I also highlighted the structure



of our mental health system, the gaps I see in care, and even introduced some therapies we use at my centre, such as electroconvulsive therapy, that aren't common in Italy.

What made this exchange so meaningful was how much I learned—not just from the Italian team, but from reflecting on and sharing my own practice. The day after I returned, I was excited to present all I had learned about Ancona's system to my colleagues in Poland, hoping to spark new ideas and improvements in our own approach.

Looking back, my time in Ancona was nothing short of transformative—both professionally and personally. I didn't just observe new systems and organisational solutions in Italian psychiatric care; I became part of a vibrant team, forging genuine connections and friendships that extended far beyond the hospital walls. Being invited to the clinic's Christmas party made me feel truly included, and those moments of camaraderie are memories I'll cherish. While sharing stories with my Italian colleagues over dinner, I realized how much our professional worlds had in common, despite the distance.

Returning home, I found myself brimming with fresh ideas and a renewed sense of purpose. For instance, I've already started adapting the structured psychoeducation program I observed in Ancona to better fit our patients' needs in Poland, and I've shared stories and strategies with my colleagues that sparked lively discussions. The beauty of the Marche region and the relaxed, welcoming spirit of Ancona added another layer of joy to my experience, making every day feel special—both inside and outside the clinic.

With complete confidence, I recommend this exchange to anyone eager for growth, inspiration, and connection. I feel genuinely grateful for the opportunity and know that the lessons and friendships I gained in Ancona will stay with me for years to come. I look forward to building on this partnership and to seeing how our shared ideas will continue to improve psychiatric care in both our countries.

31<sup>st</sup> January 2026,  
Chorzów, Poland

Anna Szczegielniak



### Photo gallery from the exchange



First day in the clinic! Prof. Volpe, Dr. Orsolini, me, and Dr. Longo.



Christmas party with Prof. Volpe team.



Amazing views of Ancona!

Please return your report to [simone.deioanna@europsy.net](mailto:simone.deioanna@europsy.net)