



EPA GAINING EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME REPORT

Applicant Name: Muhyiddin Bera Demirtaş, MD

Host Institution: University Psychiatric Hospital Vrapče, Zagreb, Croatia

Head of the Host Institution: Prof. Petrana Brečić

Local Supervisor: Dr. Nikola Žaja

Dates of Placement: May 10, 2026 – May 24, 2026

1. Introduction and Initial Impressions

My observership at the University Psychiatric Hospital Vrapče in Zagreb, Croatia, was a highly rewarding experience that exceeded my expectations. The clinic is situated on a beautiful, green, and remarkably spacious campus. It serves as a comprehensive mental health hospital that perfectly blends a rich historical legacy with modern facilities. Walking through the grounds, one can genuinely feel the history—they even have on-site museums detailing the institution's past—while simultaneously witnessing advanced psychiatric care in practice.

2. Cultural Connections

I felt fully welcomed by the hosting institution from day one. The doctors, nurses, and all other staff members were helpful and accommodating. Since the medical team and many of the patients spoke fluent English, I was able to easily integrate into the workflow and conduct direct clinical interviews.

Beyond the professional realm, the cultural exchange was a wonderful bonus. I discovered a strong cultural and linguistic connection between Croatia and Türkiye. It was heartening to bond over our shared tradition of drinking finely ground coffee (Kava / Kahve) brewed in a Đezva (Cezve). I was also amazed by the number of shared words we use daily—spanning from culinary delights like Burek (Börek), Sarma, and Čaj (Çay), to everyday concepts like Zanat (Zanaat), Jastuk (Yastık), and Sat (Saat). Discovering these traces added a great sense of familiarity to my stay.

3. Clinical Focus

I am a psychiatrist currently pursuing a PhD in Interdisciplinary Neuroscience. My clinical and scientific interests are mainly in the fields of biological psychiatry, sleep medicine, and electrophysiology. The team at Vrapče expertly tailored my placement to align with these specific interests.

During my two weeks, I rotated through a full spectrum of departments: the Sleep Disorders Department, the Affective Disorders Department, the Forensic Psychiatry



Department, and the Urgent and Intensive Care Department. I also worked night shifts to get a complete view of how the hospital operates. My days were dynamic and full of engaging tasks. I spent a significant amount of time on polysomnography and polygraphy scoring, along with MSLT and MWT reviews. I also observed emergency psychiatric assessments, outpatient polyclinic visits, and specialty consultations in neurology and sleep medicine. Attending the grand rounds provided excellent insight into their multidisciplinary approach to patient care.

4. Treatments

The placement offered numerous opportunities to learn and observe advanced therapeutic interventions. I was particularly impressed by the hospital's integration of modern neuromodulation and technological therapies. During my rotations, I had the privilege of observing Virtual Reality (VR) therapy, Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) applications, light therapy, and transcranial Direct Current Stimulation (tDCS) treatments.

5. Explorations

I was very fortunate to have my family with me during this time. We took the opportunity on weekends to explore what the region had to offer. We loved Zagreb and its nearby natural retreats of Lake Jarun and Mount Sljeme, and traveled further to visit the Karlovac aquarium, as well as the coastal towns of Krk and Baška. Exploring the historic architecture and heritage sites of these areas provided a perfect balance to the clinical weekdays.

6. Acknowledgements

Overall, this observership broadened my clinical perspective and allowed me to observe the structural workflow of a different European psychiatric institution. I had the chance to present an overview of my home institution and discuss our practices with the hosting team. I plan to make a presentation about my observership at my home institution to share the knowledge I acquired.

I am deeply grateful to the European Psychiatric Association (EPA) for providing this opportunity. Furthermore, I would like to extend my special and most sincere thanks to my supervisor Dr. Nikola Žaja, EPA project manager Andrea Michellini, as well as Dr. Anđelko Vidović, Dr. Ana Marija Šantić, Dr. Goran Arbanas, Dr. Domagoj Vidović, Dr. Nataša Đuran, Dr. Jakša Vukojević, and Niko Radas. Their hospitality and willingness to share their expertise made this mobility unforgettable.