

EPA GAINING EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME REPORT

On the observership at the Department of Emergency Psychiatry and Post-Acute Care, University
Hospital Center of Montpellier – Montpellier, France

Realised 1st – 26th June 2026

By Spyridon Baltzis

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

REPORT:

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I am grateful for the opportunity to undertake an observership at the Department of Emergency Psychiatry and Post-Acute Care, University Hospital Center of Montpellier. The placement exceeded my expectations and provided an outstanding opportunity to participate actively in research within an internationally recognised suicidology research group.

From the very beginning I felt warmly welcomed by everyone in the department. My supervisor, Dr Aiste Lengvenyte, was exceptionally supportive throughout the placement. She helped me plan my stay months in advance and she was always available to answer practical questions, discuss scientific ideas, and provide guidance whenever needed. This made it easy to become integrated into the research team and contributed greatly to a productive and enjoyable stay.

The observership had a clear scientific focus on suicide research, which closely aligns with the topic of my PhD at Lund University. My primary task was to analyse data from an existing research

database in collaboration with the research team and a statistician. This included reviewing the relevant literature, interpreting statistical analyses, and contributing to the preparation of a scientific manuscript, on which I am the first author.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the placement was the opportunity to broaden my research perspective. While my doctoral work primarily focuses on suicidality in depression, the project in Montpellier allowed me to become deeply involved in the cognitive aspects of suicidal behaviour and their interaction with inflammation. This expanded the scope of my research interests and provided valuable knowledge that will continue to influence my future work.

The placement proved to be exceptionally productive scientifically. Together with the Montpellier research group, we initiated a research manuscript on inflammation, cognition, and suicidality, scheduled a research meeting for a second collaborative project, and discussed two additional potential publications. I believe these collaborations will continue well beyond the observership and represent the beginning of a long-term scientific partnership between our institutions.

I participated in the department's weekly research meetings, where ongoing projects were presented and discussed, providing valuable insight into the group's multidisciplinary approach to suicide research. In addition, I had individual meetings with Professors Philippe Courtet and Emilie Olié to discuss future collaborations and research opportunities. I also had the opportunity to interact with researchers at different career stages, including Master's students, PhD candidates, and postdoctoral researchers, which created an inspiring and intellectually stimulating research environment.

The placement provided valuable experience in statistical interpretation, scientific writing, and international research collaboration. It also gave me a deeper understanding of how a highly productive research group organises its work and translates clinical questions into research projects. These are experiences that will directly benefit both my PhD studies and my future academic career.

Although I did not give a formal presentation about my home institution, I introduced myself and presented my own research interests to members of the research group. I would be pleased to present my experiences from this observership to colleagues and trainees at my home institution, as I believe this programme offers an excellent opportunity for both scientific and professional development.

I did not encounter any problems during my stay. On the contrary, the placement was exceptionally well organised, the research environment was welcoming, and I received continuous support throughout the observership.

In addition to the academic experience, Montpellier itself contributed greatly to the success of my stay. Its welcoming atmosphere, rich cultural heritage, and vibrant university environment created an inspiring setting for scientific exchange and international collaboration.

Overall, this observership was one of the most valuable academic experiences of my training. It strengthened my research skills, broadened the scientific scope of my PhD project, established new international collaborations, and laid the foundation for continued cooperation between Lund University and the University of Montpellier. I am sincerely grateful to the European Psychiatric Association, the University Hospital Center of Montpellier, and everyone involved in making this opportunity possible.

Please return your report to andrea.michelini@europsy.net