

PRESS RELEASE 5

September 2026



CARE + CONNECT

Delivering Mental Health
Supports in Higher
Education Institutions
across Europe

Project No: 2025-1-PL01-KA220-HED-000357751

The Care+Connect focus:

Student well-being, digital support tools, and evidence-based pedagogical approaches fits seamlessly into the Chair's strategic research agenda.

Project Duration:

CARE+CONNECT will run from October 2025 to September 2027 and is funded under the Erasmus+ programme.



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The CARE+CONNECT Project : Mental-health support in higher education

CARE+CONNECT: Strengthening Mental Health Support in Higher Education

Since October 2025, the Chair of Business and Human Resource Education (Wirtschaftspädagogik II) at Paderborn University, led by Prof. Dr. Marc Beutner, has been an active partner in the newly funded Erasmus+ project CARE+CONNECT: Delivering Mental Health Support in Higher Education Institutions across Europe.

A European Approach to Mental Health Support

CARE+CONNECT brings together universities and research organisations from six EU countries to strengthen mental health support structures for students and staff in higher education.

The project develops digital interventions, peer-support networks, and safe spaces for conversations about mental health. These include an innovative Internet-based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (iCBT) programme and structured peer-mentoring formats.

The CARE and CONNECT programmes together aim to strengthen mental health support systems in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) by combining digital self-help tools with human peer-support structures.

CARE: Digital Support for Students

CARE focuses on developing and delivering an accessible, evidence-based online Cognitive Behavioural Therapy programme for students. Its purpose is to reduce anxiety, improve emotional resilience, and offer flexible, stigma-free mental health support that students can access independently.

CONNECT: Building a Culture of Peer Support

CONNECT focuses on building sustainable peer-support cultures within universities. It establishes structured peer networks for both staff and students, trains participants in active listening and early-intervention skills, and creates safe spaces for open conversations about mental health.

Its purpose is to reduce isolation, normalise help-seeking, and strengthen community-based support.

Together, CARE and CONNECT aim to create a comprehensive, long-term mental health support ecosystem that combines digital interventions with interpersonal support. In this way, the programmes aim to make HEIs more resilient, inclusive, and responsive to students' well-being needs.

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The CARE+CONNECT Project : Mental-health support in higher education

Paderborn University's Contribution

Prof. Dr. Marc Beutner emphasises the importance of the initiative: "Mental health is a decisive factor for successful learning, participation, and academic development. CARE+CONNECT addresses a core challenge of modern higher education and aligns closely with our research on inclusive learning environments, digital didactics, and student-centred support systems."

The Chair of Business and Human Resource Education contributes its long-standing expertise in:

- digital learning and e-learning design,
- teacher and trainer education,
- support for heterogeneous learner groups,
- evaluation research, and
- the development of sustainable educational strategies.

These competencies directly support the project's goals, particularly the development of the CONNECT Peer Programme, which aims to strengthen emotional resilience and mental health literacy among students and HEI staff.

The Chair also plays a key role in evaluation, dissemination, and the development of sustainable structures that can be integrated into higher education systems across Europe.

Building on Previous Erasmus+ Experience

Prof. Beutner's research group has been involved in numerous Erasmus+ projects focusing on digitisation, inclusion, resilience, and innovative learning formats, making CARE+CONNECT a natural continuation of its work.

Contact:

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Chair of Business and Human Resource Education II

Paderborn University

Further information will be provided as the project activities and international collaborations progress.



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