

CARE + CONNECT

Delivering Mental Health Supports in Higher Education Institutions across Europe



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CARE+CONNECT Moves Forward with the Development of the CONNECT Peer Programme

Following the development and review of the eight CARE Programme modules, the CARE+CONNECT consortium is moving into the next important stage of the project: the development of the **CONNECT Peer Programme**.

The CARE Programme, developed under WP2, provides an eight-module Internet-based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (iCBT) course for higher education students. Its modules address key areas including anxiety and depression awareness, cognitive restructuring, problem-solving, coping strategies, behavioural activation and goal setting, stress and relaxation, self-esteem, and relapse prevention. The programme combines structured learning with practical exercises and guided self-reflection to support students in developing skills for managing their mental well-being.

Following content development, the consortium has also completed the **review process**, supporting the quality, consistency and practical relevance of the CARE learning materials before the programme moves towards implementation.

With this milestone achieved, partners have now started developing the content of the **CONNECT Peer Programme under WP3**. CONNECT will complement CARE by strengthening peer support and early-intervention capacity within Higher Education Institutions.

The programme will establish two structured peer-support networks: **Professional-to-Professional**, bringing together HEI staff and mental health professionals, and **Student-to-Student**, preparing students to support their peers appropriately. Training will address active listening, emotional intelligence, mental health awareness and safe referral pathways.

CONNECT will also introduce CARE+CONNECT Conversation Cafés - safe and inclusive spaces where mental health can be discussed openly. Through peer networks, training and structured opportunities for dialogue, the programme aims to strengthen belonging, encourage early help-seeking and contribute to a supportive culture of shared responsibility for well-being within university communities.

By bringing CARE and CONNECT together, the project combines individual, **evidence-based digital support with community-based peer support**, contributing to more inclusive and sustainable approaches to mental health and well-being across European higher education.



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