

# MINDFUL *compassionate* PARENTING

## Concept Paper For the development of an European Network

June 2023

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## Introduction

This concept paper has been developed in the framework of the Erasmus+ funded project “MCP goes Europe” that lasted from January 2022 to June 2023.

The fundamental aim of the project was to spread the parents’ program “Mindful Compassionate Parenting” as widely as possible across Europe, building on the success in Germany where it was initiated and where it is well established. The actors behind this project are:

- **WeMIND eV** from Germany, the association founded by Jörg Mangold, the person who has developed this program.
- **LIMINA** from Austria, with Paola Bortini and Peter Hofmann, two early followers and teachers of the program and initiator of “MCP goes Europe”.
- **Casa del Cuculo** from Italy, with Sara Galeotti following a strong desire to make the MCP program known in Italy.
- **Leitrim Child Care Committee** from Ireland, with Tommy Lavalley having a strong interest to combine MCP with other offers and programs they provide for parents locally and regionally.

The project in these 18 months focused on setting the foundations for what eventually should become an European network for and around Mindful Compassionate Parenting. The most important documents – the guide for teachers facilitating MCP and the parents handbook – were translated into English and Italian. Building on it a first pathway for training new MCP teachers had been implemented. **Altogether 20 professionals from 13 different European countries have been trained to act as teachers facilitating the MCP program for parents.** The first courses for parents in Polish, Slovenia and Spanish language have already taken place.

Now at the end of this first phase the four partners behind the project have reflected what has been achieved and what is needed now to make the next necessary steps to create a sustainable European network. These reflections you can find in this Concept Paper.

If you want to contact us to know more about the network write us to:  
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# Status Quo at the end of the first phase

## Genesis of the MCP program

The MCP program has been developed by *Jörg Mangold*, a German child and adolescent psychiatrist, family therapist, mindfulness teacher and father of four.

In 2017, Jörg adapted and expanded the elements of various proven course formats of evidence-based mindfulness (e.g. MBSR, MSC, MBCT, MBCL, PNT, MP). The result is Mindfulness Compassionate Parenting (MCP®), a course format that supports parents in meeting the needs of themselves and their children with love and compassion in the middle of all challenges of everyday family life.

In 2019, the course programme was certified as a stress prevention course in Germany and can be subsidised by the health insurance funds in Germany.

It can be run as a 8 or 10-weeks program with one 2-hour session a week or as a 3-days program split in three single days with one week breaks in between.

Over the last 5 years almost 200 professionals have been trained to facilitate MCP programs in German language.

## Start of the MCP goes Europe project

The huge positive resonance of the MCP program in Germany and a bit also in Austria and Switzerland gave rise to the idea to spread it into other countries and languages – so that many more parents can benefit of it. Peter and Paola from LIMINA with their extensive experience with European cooperation projects proposed to Jörg to setup a first project within the EU funding scheme of Erasmus+. We looked for a partner from an English-speaking country – and found Tommy with his organisation Leitrim Child Care Committee very active in family and parent support in Ireland. Last but not least we decided for Italy as a first other country to promote MCP in another language than German or English - and found Sara and Casa del Cuculo, a cooperative in the region of Emilia Romagna and also very experienced with European cooperation projects.

We applied for funding under the Adult Education strand of Erasmus+ and were successful: ***MCP goes Europe could start in January 2022!***

## What have we achieved with MCP goes Europe?

In terms of events we have run:

- Two online orientation seminars of three days each in English language with together 23 participants from 12 different European countries. Orientation seminars are a compact and intensive way to get to know the MCP program – targeted at professionals wanting to teach the program.
- One 10 weeks online course for parents in Italian language.
- One 6 days online teacher training with 20 professionals from 13 different countries.

In terms of documents:

- The guide for teachers to facilitate the program exists now in German, English, Italian language.
- The Parents handbook with many valuable resources out of the MCP program is available for free download in German, Italian and English language.

Other achievements:

- The website [www.mindfulcompassionateparenting.org](http://www.mindfulcompassionateparenting.org) has by now information in 6 different languages (GER, ENG, IT, POL, CRO and ESP).
- First MCP courses for parents have taken place in Polish, Slovenian and Spanish language.

# MCP Europe – a network of hubs and teachers

At the beginning of MCP goes Europe we were not sure how the information would spread best in Europe. We used various channels – some more wide (Social Media), some more targeted (via organisations of professionals). By this we reached out to individuals as well as organisations being interested. From the 20 trained international teachers in this first phase 13 were connected to an organisation.

Therefore, we are thinking the further development of the MCP Europe network in two strands:

- **Strand 1:** Organisations acting as national “hubs”
- **Strand 2:** The individual MCP teachers

## How do we understand “hubs”?

National MCP hub organisations should act as the main connection point in a country. Ideally, they have a background as a provider of mindfulness-based courses and/or as a provider of family support and guidance programs. Their role would be:

- Responsibility for the translation of the necessary materials (teacher guide and parents handbook). Also for keeping them updated.
- Organisation of national teacher trainings and orientation seminars in close cooperation with the co-ordination of the network.
- Safeguarding the quality control of the implementation of MCP courses in their country.
- Supporting the promotion of MCP in their country.

Benefits these hub organisations would have:

- Visibility as an organisation on the [www.mindfulcompassionateparenting.org](http://www.mindfulcompassionateparenting.org) website.
- Participation in an annual network meeting.
- Visibility on a national level – being member of such an European network can strengthen their profile.

Currently we have hub organisations in the following countries:



## **How can MCP teachers be involved in the network?**

On our central website we have an international MCP teacher database with a search function in English and German language at the moment. Certified MCP teachers can list themselves in the database with their profile and offers. As long as there is no national MCP hub in their country they can receive support directly from the European coordination.



# Coordination of the network

## Status Quo

In this first phase the coordination of the network was managed by the 4 partner organisations initiating MCP goes Europe; with Jörg from WeMind and Paola and Peter from LIMINA acting as a sort of steering committee. The network as such does not have a legal entity. WeMind is the host of the website and Jörg has the intellectual property rights on the MCP program.

Whenever ready a national hub can translate the standard presentation of the program on the website in their language and ask for adding it on [www.mindfulcompassionateparenting.org](http://www.mindfulcompassionateparenting.org). They can add their contact details and links to their organisational website.

MCP Teachers can be listed on the website without any costs for now.

## Considerations for the upcoming future

- No legal structure
- We want to keep the network as much as possible free from bureaucratic demands that might arise from a legal structure (eg. as an association).

## Coordination group

The group of national hubs form together the coordination group for the network with following tasks:

- Common promotion strategies.
- Monitoring the quality implementation of the MCP courses across the countries based on collected feedback from MCP teachers.
- Managing the common website.
- Discussing potential adaptations of formats of the standard MCP course.
- Discussing potential finance mechanisms – EU funding, membership fees, costs of online MCP courses across Europe, etc.

The facilitation of the coordination group would rotate between the hubs every 6 months. The group would meet roughly three times a year online and once a year in person for a skill share gathering.

## Steering committee

As a kind of executive board it makes sense to have a small body taking strategic decisions such as:

- New national hubs.
- Adaptations of the standard MCP format.
- Who becomes a teacher trainer.
- Financial matters.

The group should consist of three persons max – WeMind/Jörg as a steady member and representatives of two additional hubs.

## Finances

- Cost of the website
  - The hosting costs and the work of the web manager need to be covered. In an initial phase it will be a combination of regular contributions of hubs as well as teachers.
- Cost of an annual skill share gathering of hubs
  - Cost sharing between the hubs.

# Pathways to become a MCP teacher and other quality aspects

## Pathway to become a MCP teacher

These are the conditions for becoming a MCP teacher.

The coordination group in the first phase (current phase) has agreed on:

**Prerequisite for embarking on the pathway of becoming a MCP teacher:**

- Established own mindfulness practice of at least 1 year.

Desirable:

- Experience of working with parents.
- Attendance of - at least - one recognised mindfulness course (MBSR, MSC, MBCL).
- Attendance of - at least - one meditation retreat lasting several days.

**Actual pathway for becoming MCP teacher foresees three steps:**

1. Attendance of an MCP Orientation Seminar or a standard MCP course for parents.
2. Attendance of an MCP Teacher Training.
3. Supervision during the first self-held MCP course (ideally group supervision; 6 sessions).



**Quality aspects to be safeguarded within the network:**

- The translations of the teacher guide translations into any new language need to be quality-checked by a person who was not involved in the translation.
- At least 80% of the content of the teacher guide needs to be implemented as foreseen when the course for parents has the label “MCP”.

- Teacher trainers need to have facilitated at least 3 own MCP parents courses, ideally 5; and they should have assisted in one teacher training before being autonomously in charge of one themselves. Before this, teacher training in languages other than English needs to be run by teacher trainers from the international team (currently Jörg, Paola and Peter) and translated by one of the local MCP trainers. The network regularly offers orientation seminars and teacher training in English language.
- The MCP programs and publications in all languages need to include the standard MCP logo.
- Hubs should collect at least once a year feedback from teachers about the response of parents and if any adaptations are needed.

## Outlook and next steps

The next phase of development for the MCP Europe network is going to be marked by the qualities of consolidation, deepening and slight growth.

The focus is now on:

- Establishing the coordination group with the existing hubs and bringing it to life.
- Establishing the steering committee.
- Looking for potential hub organisations in additional countries where we have teachers that have attended the Teacher training and not yet run their first course (specifically Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, United Kingdom).
- Looking for potential hub organisations in countries where we have already trained MCP teachers (specifically Slovenia).
- Developing proposals for financing the central coordination costs.
- Promoting and running the orientation seminar (in November 2023) and the teacher training (in March 2024) in English language; as well as the orientation seminar and teacher training in Italian language (October/November/December 2023).

The date and modalities of implementation of this concept are to be decided in Autumn 2023.