VIRTUAL MOBILITY (VM) GRANT
REPORT TEMPLATE

This report is submitted by the VM grantee to VNS Manager, who will coordinate the approval on behalf of the Action MC.

Action number: CA18218

VM grant title: Burden of COVID-19 Working Group

VM grant start and end date: 01/10/2021 **to** 31/10/2021

Grantee name: Sara Monteiro Pires

<u>Description of the outcomes and achieved outputs (including any specific Action objective and deliverables, or publications resulting from the Virtual Mobility).</u>

The COVID-19 WG contributed to research coordination and capacity building objectives of the European Burden of Disease Network. With its virtual plenary meetings and ad-hoc meetings and correspondence with individual partners, the COVID-19 WG supported to the conduction national COVID-19 disease burden studies in at least 10 countries. Some of these will result in reports and scientific publications, with at least three being prepared. The group supported capacity building and exchange of knowledge, targeted to the level of development of each partner's study. Furthernore, the WG developed harmonized methodology and a protocol for method implementation, which ensured the implementation of comparable methods. It brght together experts and expertise and contributed towards expansion and harmonization of the currently scattered burden of disease landscape into one transnational team, with a focus on COVID-19. It also supported the identifification of critical knowledge and data gaps. We built and increased capacity in burden of disease assessment across Europe, with a particular focus on involving of specific target groups. The WG included approximately 50% Early Career Investigators and teams and countries with less capacity in the field of burden of disease. The COVID-19 WG is now working on a joiny article for publication in a scientific journal, and is exected to contribute to a number of scientific articles describing national burden of COVID-19 studies performed under the WG's support.

<u>Description of the benefits to the COST Action Strategy (what and how).</u>

The COVID-WG enhanced the collaboration potential of burden-eu. The WG is open for anyone interested to join. By being part of the burden-eu Action, and making use of its platform of members and open policy for new members at any stage, the WG-COVID attracted approximately 25 members from 13 countries, including from NNC and IPC. It also had a participant from the Regional Office of the World Health Organization, who joined to follow developments on methodology discussed by the participants. The topic of interest is a high prioriry across the region, and the WG members leverage our exchange of experience. Members included researchers, public health policy workers, and other stakeholder with an interest in the field. The virtual and flexible nature of the activities facilitated the enrollement of members from all countries, and participation in activities as planeed directly with members. Overall, the COVID-WG supported research by members and created capacity to estimate disease burden at national level. We also contributed with advocacy for the burden of disease approach in Europe, particularly for demonstrating the health impact of unexpected and widespread health events such as COVID-19 pandemic.

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Description of the virtual collaboration (including constructive reflection on activities undertaken, identified successful practices and lessons learned).

The COVID-WG met virtually in plenary (whole group) meetings, and separately with country-members in an ad-hoc fashion. Email communications between the organizer, other experts and the country partners also ensured conutious support of participants. Additionally, all participants were encouraged to make use of the burden-eu's online forum for quick question-and-answer and discussions by all members. All activities proved successful, and we highlight that the multi-faceted nature of exchanges facilitated progress by partners. Additionally, the collaborative work motivated the joint writing of (or contribution to) articles.