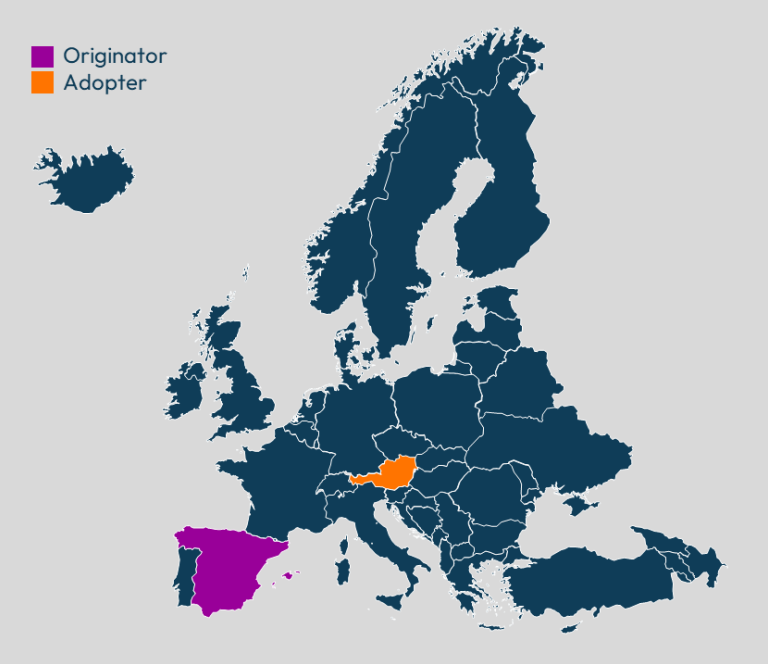
DHU Twinning: Mendel's Brain

Application of genetic analyses for mental health prevention

Originator: Mendel's Brain, Spain

Adopter: Beandgo, Austria



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Project Overview

Application of Genetic Analyses for Mental Health Prevention aimed to integrate genetics with psychological assessment. This involved collaboration between geneticists and psychologists to adopt a holistic approach, enhancing the validity and reliability of mental health assessments by combining genetic testing with traditional self-report measures and clinical interviews.

Project Partners

Mendel Brain, the originator, is a Spanish genetics company specializing in the analysis of psychological traits. Founded in 2019 by Manuel Perez Alonso, a genetics professor at the University of Valencia, it focuses on providing genetic tools that promote personalized medicine. **Beandgo**, the adopter, is a pioneering venture founded in February 2020, committed to addressing the mental health and wellbeing needs of European society. Led by Dr. Maria Begoña San Jose Aza, Beandgo analyzes market trends and demands related to mental health, aiming to create meaningful solutions.

Application and Implementation

The application of genetic analysis in psychology centers allows professionals to screen patients and understand their genetic vulnerabilities, helping prevent emotional disorders like depression and anxiety by providing emotional management tools. Both Mendel Brain and Beandgo aimed to test the solution in local markets and establish a long-term partnership to launch a differential service in multiple European countries, thereby increasing their competitive strength in international markets.

Project Objectives

The project's overall objectives included:

- **Strengthening the mental health sector**: Using genetic analysis to improve mental health protocols and personalize interventions.
- **Promoting innovation**: Driving further research into the genetics of emotional disorders to develop new therapies and contribute to the global understanding of mental health conditions.
- **Benefiting patients and caregivers**: Personalizing treatment approaches, enabling early intervention, reducing the severity of emotional disorders, and highlighting the biological basis of mental health issues to reduce stigma.
- **Reducing the economic burden**: Identifying at-risk individuals early and providing effective interventions to decrease hospitalizations and missed workdays.

Specific Objectives

Specific objectives included:

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- Integrating genetic tools into Beandgo's services through training sessions in genetics and neurobiology and producing information materials to facilitate user recruitment.
- Defining the market for genetic test applications by training local staff, choosing partners, developing web-based resources, and collaborating with opinion leaders.
- Shipping DNA kits for genotyping samples, recruiting 35 customers for sample collection, performing DNA processing in an external laboratory, and building psychology reports for each customer.
- Designing personalized plans to prevent the development of emotional disorders using genetic predisposition knowledge.

Main Results

During implementation, the project raised awareness in the mental health field about the role of genetics in emotional disorders. Collaboration with the Austrian Chamber of Commerce helped in identifying partners, and an Austrian psychiatrist specializing in bipolarity was contacted to provide samples for testing. However, the focus shifted to corporate human resources when initial partnerships did not materialize. Communication and visibility actions included disseminating project updates via LinkedIn.

In terms of achievements, the project succeeded in exchanging information between professionals, creating business networks abroad, and raising awareness about the importance of genetics in mental health. However, genotyping of samples was delayed due to issues in partner identification.

Project Impact

The project's impact includes the identification of new business opportunities, creation of new research projects, and development of new products. The beneficiary organization will continue offering genetic services and use established contacts to seek new business opportunities. Despite challenges in finding suitable partners, the project was a successful cooperation and learning experience, highlighting the importance of flexibility and persistence in partner identification and collaboration efforts.

Future Actions

Future actions recommended include continuing the search for research and innovation grants to further genetic and psychological integration.

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