

Key Action: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices
Action Type: Strategic Partnerships for vocational education and training

Project Title

Who's calling the shots? Citizen Empowerment in Mental Health: from the think tank to operational perspectives for user self-determination

Project Coordinator

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Project Information

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Partners FONDATION TRAJETS (CH) , UNIVERSITATEA AUREL VLAICU DIN ARAD (RO) , Kentro Psichikis kai Paidagogikis Ypostirixis (Center for Mental and Pedagogical Support) (EL) , Centre de Terapia Interfamiliar S.L. (ES) , Centre Neuro Psychiatrique Saint-Martin (BE) , Association Francophone d'Education Comparée (FR) , Kariateam (FR)
Topics Inclusion - equity ; International cooperation, international relations, development cooperation ; Disabilities - special needs

Project Summary

According to the Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020 (WHO, 2013) and the European Commission's Green Paper of 2005, self-determination and empowerment of people with mental disorders are fundamental concepts in mental health development to improve social inclusion. They act as a catalyst on their ability to make decisions about their own lives, including the care they receive, to remobilize, to take responsibility for their choices, and to become full-fledged citizens, regardless of their illness. Although there is currently little research on the impact of self-determination as a factor of social inclusion, research shows that increasing this capacity has a positive influence on people's sense of well-being in all areas of life (Deci and Ryan, 2016).

The "Empow'Them" project is in line with the actions advocated by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2008) because it aims to contribute to the respect and dignity of mental health users through professional practices that support their individual freedom. More concretely, its objective is to promote the emergence of self-determined behaviour in users by improving the support skills of professionals active in the mental health field (carers, educators, support staff, etc.) and thus facilitate the expression of the will of people with mental disorders within institutions.

In effect, certain institutional habits can hinder the process of self-determination. What can be done then to better support the users towards more assumed, more self-determined behaviours? What are good professional practices? How can we guarantee a coherent and concerted implementation of these practices within the teams? Our intention is to take up this challenge and to design, through an innovative pedagogical engineering approach, training to enable professionals to efficiently respond to it. Thus, the project mobilizes 8 partners, from 6 different countries and with complementary expertise, in actions aimed at creating a specific training that will remain available in free access (Creative Commons license) on a Moodle platform for a minimum of 3 years after the end of the project.

The first step will be to draw up a guide for analysing practices in the form of a questionnaire based on a theoretical and conceptual base from the main scientific and professional databases. This questionnaire will be used to explore practices through semi-directive interviews conducted by user-professional pairs. These interviews will make it possible to identify the behaviours, actions and postures that promote the emergence of self-determined behaviours among users by combining them with elements extracted from the literature review. The results of this survey will feed into the base of the skills referential for training.

The pedagogical setup is inspired by reverse pedagogy and is at the heart of our project's innovation. Actually, we notice that an ordinary training system is insufficient to work over the long term on the competencies of interpersonal skills and posture within the teams. The challenge is to keep the questioning process alive among all professionals, especially newcomers, so that they can examine their practices and representations, without overloading the schedules with binding training in matters of staff mobilization. To get around these obstacles, the methodology we recommend aims to set up a continuous, non-disruptive training for the organization of services, free of charge and addressed to all professionals. Field staff trainers will be prepared and we will provide them with video supports and courses on digital supports with an approach inspired by reverse pedagogy. The videos focus on theoretical knowledge, such as definitions and history of self-determination, the principles of coaching, the socio-pedagogical relationship. The course material is a driver for the facilitators. It sequentially presents all the pedagogical activities. The advantage is that these are short (half-day) and progressive training courses, which take place in teams within the institution itself and are therefore anchored on the reality of the field.

"Suffering is not only defined by physical pain, or even mental pain, but by the reduction or even destruction of the ability to act, the capacity of doing, felt as an attack on the integrity of the self." Paul Ricoeur. *Oneself as Another* (Soi-même comme un autre). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, (1990).

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