

Mental Health Matters

through Restorative Art



April 2020

Newsletter 1

The project

The World Health Organisation called for mental health to be treated as everyone's responsibility. In many countries, mental illness is the leading cause of disability. People suffering from mental illness and especially those who live in mental health structures are in the forefront of socially disadvantaged groups, suffering even more from social stigmatization and marginalization. These people usually also suffer from societal injustices.

Although art's healing effect on mental health is being acknowledged more and more, it is not an optional therapeutic approach for most of mental health structures in many European Countries. Moreover, even though there is an obvious need for more contemporary approaches, which will possibly reduce the use of medicines, most of the structures are being stuck to old protocols avoiding alternative methodological approaches and routines, as a result of ignorance or being afraid to try something new. The potential and benefits of combining therapeutic art with restorative justice are still not translated into educational material and programmes leaving many adult learners and professionals in the field unaware.

Mental Health Matters through Restorative Art (MHM) aims to respond to this by bringing together a cross-sector, strategic partnership to support innovation in the adult education field by creating, piloting, and disseminating educational material and tools tailored to the needs and realities of mental health professionals, restorative justice practitioners and artists in the participating countries and across Europe.

Objectives:

MHM aims to enhance the skills, knowledge and experience of mental health professionals using art and restorative justice values. MHM also aims to train artists to use art in order to facilitate the relief of mentally ill patients and their social restoration. The ultimate goal is to create innovative tools that enhance the healthcare provision and self-representation of those who live within mental health structures. Thus, the main aim is to create a methodological approach that puts together the benefits of art therapy with the values of restorative justice. MHM will also design and accredit e-courses that will enhance the skills and knowledge of adult learners, supporting in this way the setting up of, and access to upskilling pathways.

Start Date: 01 November 2019

End Date: 31 October 2021

The consortium includes 6 partner entities:

- Restorative Justice for All, UK
- Center for Social Innovation (CSI), Cyprus
- Kinonikes Sineteristikes Drastiriotites Epathon Omodon, EDRA, Greece
- Lélekben Otthon Közhasznú Alapítvány (LOKA), Hungary
- Fundacion INTRAS, Spain
- Anotati Scholi KAlon Technon, ASFA, Greece

First Transnational Partner Meeting

On January 31, 2020, partners traveled from the UK, Spain, Hungary, and Greece to Cyprus, for the first meeting of the project Mental Health Matters through Restorative Art.

The aim was to set the framework that they will follow in the next period so that they achieve the goals of the project. More specifically they had a discussion about the project, its objectives and outcomes, as well as their roles and obligations.

By the end of the day, the consortium had a clear and concrete plan based on which they will be working the next two years. The first goal is the completion of the first Intellectual Output "Training Manual: The use of restorative art in mental health structures".



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“Training Manual: The use of restorative art in mental health structures”

During the last months, the partners worked on the research phase of the project, which will lead to the production of the first intellectual output, “Training Manual: The use of restorative art in mental health structures”. The manual will be based on a transnational study in which all partners will be actively involved and will reflect the use of art in mental health structures among the participating countries, as well as certain ways in which art is being exploited in these structures. It will also be based on a needs analysis through original fieldwork, which will be conducted with professionals in partner countries using quantitative and qualitative data collection methods.

RJ4ALL- United Kingdom

To conduct the fieldwork both methods of quantitative and qualitative research were used. The qualitative approach was used to explore the restorative justice availability in current climate to be able to recognise its suitability and awareness. One of the data collection methods used was interviews with professionals in order to explore the topic and share their experiences within the field. RJ4ALL engaged with professionals working in the UK prison system and artists providing therapeutic structures within the service delivery in individual or group settings.

Lélekben Otthon Közhasznú Alapítvány (LOKA) - Hungary

LOKA implemented two types of qualitative research to investigate the use of art in the mental health system: professionals at the Debrecen Psychiatric Institute provided information about their work and the way they use various mental health methods to heal patients. Additionally, interviews and questionnaires were completed with artists-art therapists concerning their experience in art therapy in mental health care.



EDRA and ASFA - Greece

K.S.D.E.O. “EDRA”, in collaboration with the Athens School of Fine Arts organised a survey, in order to study the convergence of art and therapy in the field of Mental Health. The research methodology included the completion of the MHM questionnaire by the two focus groups. The results highlighted that, the participation of functional beneficiaries / patients with mental health issues in art empowerment programs fills them with joy and leads to personal development, socialisation, and mental reactivation. Therefore, it is necessary to promote such partnerships, in order to raise awareness and provide adequate information to mental health professionals on art’s therapeutic power.



INTRAS- Spain

INTRAS worked on the production of the national report on the use of art as a restorative tool in the mental health sector in Spain. First, an in-depth literature review was carried out. Despite the last advances of the discipline, the investigation underlined a lack of studies focusing on methods and procedures to implement art therapy in this context. The secondary research was realized with the contribution of 20 relevant professionals, which provided meaningful insights to define the training needs and the benefits that the implementation of this practice might entail in the mental health field.

CSI- Cyprus

CSI conducted qualitative research in the field of art therapy and mental health. As a first step, the research team conducted desk research, including articles and bibliography regarding the specific issue. Then, personal semi- structured interviews were conducted with people from the field of art therapy as well as mental health professionals. The main conclusion was that art therapy is not a well-known subject in Cyprus while at the same time its practice at mental health structures is limited. At the same time the professionals underlined the positive effects such a practice has on their patients.