

Report
“Revealing European Values In Volunteering in Europe” #REVIVE Seminar
Croatia

9 November 2023, Hotel Academia, Zagreb

The REVIVE seminar in Croatia, *Community Programmes for Mental Health: Potential for Development in Croatia*, was held within the National Volunteer Conference, which focused on community programmes for mental health in Croatia.

The seminar began with a presentation that introduced the conclusions of the EU conference on mental health, followed by the research results on the mental health of EU citizens. Finally, the strategic framework of mental health development in Croatia was introduced in more detail.

All that served as a basis for the discussion within the World Café. The participants were divided into groups to talk about different subjects related to mental health and volunteering in Croatia. The topics revolved around youth support, best practices in Croatia, the role of civil society organisations in community mental health improvement, cooperation between civil society organisations, educational institutions and local authorities regarding the development of mental health programmes, the potential of volunteering in the prevention of mental health challenges and the possible integration of technology and digital tools in mental health programmes. After the discussion, the facilitators presented all the conclusions.

It was concluded that the efforts to improve mental health in the communities need a strategic approach, which includes mapping and evaluation of the existing activities and planning the next steps following the findings, as well as a functional national strategy with concrete measures that are truly implemented. Volunteering and mentoring are of utmost importance, as well as intersectoral and intergenerational cooperation and the recognition of the role of civil society organisations in mental health protection. The best way to include persons with mental health challenges is inclusive volunteering. Furthermore, mental health programmes should be created and supervised by experts in that field, and all the volunteer coordinators and volunteers implementing such programmes should be educated and trained before working with the beneficiaries. The participants concluded that volunteering has great significance in the prevention of mental health challenges and that it should be more heavily promoted to raise awareness among the public and decision-makers alike. Also, online tools can be very efficient in ensuring continuous support to the beneficiaries, and both the providers and the beneficiaries of mental health improvement programmes should be educated in using digital tools, especially about Internet safety to prevent potential harmful effects on mental health and the safety of users. In essence, it is necessary to strengthen the cooperation between various stakeholders, raise the awareness of the society and the decision-makers on the existing resources and potentials of volunteering for the protection and improvement of mental health, increase the efforts in promoting

the benefits of volunteering and integrate technology and digital tools into mental health protection programmes, while ensuring accessibility and safety for all social groups.

Quotes:

„I enjoyed the sense of kinship during the event, as well as the opening of the discussion on so many interesting topics.”

„It was a wonderful and inspiring event.”



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