



NEW MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY : Is Serbia Restarting?

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History of reforms

- 2003-2008 : Stability Pact Mental Health Project
 - Mental health strategy;
 - New law for protection of mentally ill;
 - Pilot community mental health center;
- Open Arms Project (2013-2016), with one of main results:
 - Transformation plan for residential and psychiatric institutions and development plan for the cross-sectoral community-based social and health services created.

2017 – CoE project

Horizontal Facility Action on “Enhancing Human Rights Protection of Detained and Sentenced Persons in Serbia”;

The Council of Europe and European Union is currently assisting Serbian authorities in their efforts to comply with standards set in the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and to implement recommendations of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture – CPT, as well as the relevant European Court of Human Rights judgments.

This Action is implemented in close cooperation and in partnership with the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Ombudsman and European Integration Office.

Tasks completed so far

- *Report Concerning Serbian Act for the Protection of Mentally Ill Individuals*; by Prof. Peter Bartlett and Dr Margret Osterfeld;
- *Report on the Assessment Visit of Rehabilitation Programmes for Individuals Detained Within Prison Psychiatric Hospitals and Psychiatric Hospitals*, by Ms Michele Gilluley and Prof. Elizabeth Gilchrist;
- *ASSESSMENT OF THE MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY (2007-2017) AND ITS ACTION PLAN*, BY PROF. VLADIMIR JOVIĆ

Assessment of the MH Strategy: The Main Aim

- to provide an in-depth assessment of the previous 2007-2017 Mental Health Strategy and its Action Plan and link recommendations for the outline of the new Strategy and Action Plan with the existing European and in particular the Council of Europe (CoE) standards.

It pays a special attention to the existing CoE Disability Strategy 2017-2023*, and Disability Action Plan 2006**.



**HUMAN RIGHTS:
A REALITY FOR ALL**



Council of Europe
Disability Strategy 2017-2023

*Human rights: a reality for all - Council of Europe Disability Strategy 2017-2023 (2017);

**Council of Europe, Disability Action Plan 2006, Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec(2006)5

MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY

2007:

THE FRAMEWORK

- the only official document which is supporting transformation of psychiatric services into a community based mental health care.
- National Committee for Mental Health (NCMH), - 2003; part of the activities within the Stability Pact Mental Health Program

Psychiatric system – then and now

- evenly balanced territorial coverage of inpatient psychiatric services;
- psychiatric services at the primary health care level („more than 50% of them do not have specialized psychiatric ambulatory service“)
- the lack of territorial mental health care
- the lack of cooperation between psychiatric and the social welfare institutions
- the lack of community mental health care centres

Continuing existence of large psychiatric hospitals

- There are still five large hospitals which basically function as asylums;
- Treatment is based on psychopharmacotherapy, with some and rudimentary psychosocial rehabilitation programs;
- All directors of all hospitals said that between 30-40% of patients are able to live in community and could be released *immediately*.
- ***Districts without hospitals – less hospitalized patients!***

Individuals with mental disability outside of the system of health care

- Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Issues:
 - 11 social care homes with total capacity of 1903 beds, and more than 50% of their clients (approximately 2000 individuals) are institutionalized primarily due to mental health problems;
- Ministry of Justice
 - Special Prison Hospital has a capacity of 400-450 beds, while the number of detainees can reach up to 700
 - forensic patients are being treated in forensic departments in hospitals in Vršac, Gornja Toponica and Novi Kneževac. Only Special Prison Hospital is under auspices of Ministry of Justice, which brings some disadvantages to its organization and functioning.

Financing of large hospitals

- National Preventive Mechanism: *„The existing system of hospital funding is not based on the actual services provided, but on the criteria that do not respect the specific characteristics of a psychiatric hospital, and therefore the costs of the treatment and rehabilitation of patients are not adequately covered, which causes difficulties in the functioning of the hospital”*;
- FS: 840-870 EUR per patient, per month from RHIF;

Human rights in psychiatric hospitals

- European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) has visited Serbia on several occasions: in 2004, 2007, 2011, and 2015;
- Serbian NPM: a total of 73 recommendations were sent

Bio-psycho-social approach in the community

- December 2006: the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD);
- CoE Disability Strategy 2017-2023: *“Both the UN Convention and the Council of Europe Action Plan marked a ‘paradigm shift’ from the traditional medical-based approach to disability to one based on human rights“*;
- UN Rapporteur on Health: *“For decades, mental health services have been governed by a reductionist biomedical paradigm that has contributed to the exclusion, neglect, coercion and abuse of people with intellectual, cognitive and psychosocial disabilities...”*

Involvement of users

- The Disability Strategy asks for: *“Full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in all areas of life and society as a whole is crucial for the enjoyment of all human rights. In the context of the Council of Europe this means increased and improved participation of persons with disabilities throughout the work and activities of the Council of Europe, including in co-operation projects funded, supported, managed or implemented by the Council of Europe”*.
- individuals with mental disability should participate in the process of drafting of the new mental health policy and new law on protection of rights of mentally ill and to have a chance to contribute to change and development of services and provisions of the new law;

Role of local self-governments

- Local self-governments do have an important experience in work with services in the community which could be of great importance as a support for the future community mental health centres;
- Efforts should be made to build capacities for local self-governments, especially with their social protection departments, in order to make decisions on the needs of the population at the local level.

Future Development

- Working group for DI of the MoH is established with a task to prepare a new MH Strategy together with Action Plan;
- Council of Europe and European Commission – new 3-year programme for follow up of the implementation of the strategy;
- IAN – to develop CSO and human rights-based programs for support and monitoring...