



### ABSTRACT FORM

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<b>Title of the contribution/Titolo del contributo</b>	The Role and Value of Mental Health Service Users' Association in Fostering and Promoting Recovery		
<b>Objectives/Obiettivi</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To showcase the experiences of promoting a program focused on recovery among the members of a mental health service users' association;</li> <li>- to discuss the significance and uniqueness of opportunities offered by peers in promoting recovery from mental illness;</li> <li>- to address the issue of the link between recovery in mental health and protection of rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities.</li> </ul>		

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This paper aims primarily to showcase the experiences of promoting an educational program focused on recovery among the members of a mental health service users' association. In order to strengthen the theoretical knowledge and practical skills of its members, a users' association conceived and offered a training which was meant to elucidate the concepts of psychosocial disability and recovery as they are presented in the social model of disability, to motivate the training participants to engage in advocacy and peer support activities of the organization; and to enable each training participant to create own individual recovery plan so he or she can present it to physicians, family members and friends to get support for its implementation. The training involved elements of theoretical teaching, as well as various forms of group work,

work in pairs, and individual activities.

Theme units this training covers were selected to provide knowledge on key concepts but primarily to provide motivation and practical guidance in everyday life and the work of the participants within the association. The training encompassed a theoretical introduction to mental health and mental disorders; the concept of psychosocial disability within the social model of disability; recovery and principles of recovery; formulating an individual recovery plan; self-advocacy, and peer support. Based on the experiences gained in the process of offering the training to groups of mental health service users joining the association, the significance and uniqueness of opportunities offered by peers in promoting recovery from mental illness is discussed. Finally, the paper addresses the issue of the link between the concept of recovery in mental health and protection of rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities, all in the context of users' initiatives.

**Key words:** recovery in mental health, mental health service users' association, peer support, rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities