Poland has started in July 2018 the reform of Mental Health (later: MH) system which has been awaited since 1994. The process of change relies on transition from institutional to community-based system and is in line with changes which have been taking place all over Europe since the 1970s.

Context:
The structure of Polish MH system reflects the way of thinking, which has been perpetuated over decades, about the mentally ill and mental illness. It’s based on the following assumptions:

1. Mental illness is incurable and a person diagnosed as “mentally ill” will remain ill through the rest of his/her life.
2. Mentally ill persons can be dangerous for themselves and for the society, that is why they should be subjected to treatment in an isolated place - psychiatric hospital.
3. Due to the long-term course of illness, many persons lose their ability to live independently in the society and, then, in the case of no support from a family, they should be placed in a social care centre or in a residential care.
4. Financing the activity of 24/7 inpatient psychiatric wards is based on the rule „we pay for each bed occupied” and not for the effect of treatment.

Structure of MH budget was: 70% - hospitals, 29% - ambulatory treatment, 1%
- community teams.

Actions undertaken by NGOs:
Small group of people representing NGOs had believe that “In the XXI century there MUST BE another solution in Europe”. So, we started to look for this solution:
- 2011: Open Dialogue, Finland
- 2013: Recovery Assistants, Germany
- 2015: WHO CC in Triest, Community Mental Health system based on 3 pillars: Prevention - Treatment - Social Support

Turning point
Within 2015 - 2016 we have organized 5 study visits with 80 people from all over Poland representing Ministries,, National Health Fund, psychiatric hospitals, regional authorities, families, doctors, nurses, people for lived experience, NGOs. Why so many? We wanted the disseminate the message about changes which Triest society has done since 1971. Here in Triest we have built our:
- determination to influence Polish Government to start the reform
- model of CMHC to be implemented in Poland
- knowledge how to apply for money from EU funds for DI process
- relationships with people who became our partners and friends.

The reform has been started in VII 2018 and is actually piloted via 27 MHCs (Polish budget) and 4 CMHC (EU funds).

More details - at my presentation