

European Volunteer Events for Therapy through Sports



PROJECT COORDINATOR:
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SENDING ORGANISATIONS
FROM:

-  GREECE (20)
-  ITALY
-  SPAIN
-  UK
-  IE
-  FRANCE
-  GERMANY
-  PORTUGAL
-  CZECH REPUBLIC
-  LITHUANIA
-  CROATIA
-  SLOVENIA
-  TURKEY
-  BULGARIA

OBSERVERS FROM:
ITALY, BELGIUM, UK

PROJECT DURATION:
Nov 2017 - Oct 2018

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OVERALL GOAL

The EUROPEAN VOLUNTEER EVENTS for THERAPY through SPORTS - "EVENTS Project" aims to develop strong institutional procedures for the specific contribution of sport and physical exercise to the prevention, the therapy and the rehabilitation of mental health service users at European level within the overall **Active Living** context.

CORE ACTIVITY

Implementation of the 3-day 1st European Sport & Physical Exercise pilot Event for Mental Health in September 2018 in Athens, Greece, as the first step towards its adaptation as an institution.

Training seminar for professionals of both fields (MH/Sport) and a parallel event on addressing Stigma will also follow after the implementation of the event.



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POLICY FRAMEWORK:

The connection between the fields of Sport & Physical Exercise and Mental Health is not entirely represented by the already established sports procedures that refer either to physical or to intellectual disabilities.

The following reasons can be related with this fact:

1. A mental disorder isn't necessarily a disability, as a mental patient may be fully functional in the broader context of social life.
2. A mental disorder may be often temporary.
3. Prevention doesn't apply as a term in situations such as the ones mentioned above, yet it plays a significant role in the field of Mental Health.
4. Individuals that suffer from physical disabilities are more likely to meet with social inclusion and integration. Conversely, mental disorders are not easily recognized and accepted by the society so the mentally patients are often victims of stigma and discrimination.
5. According to one of the most powerful trends of community psychiatry, social constructs are often involved in the treatment of mental health problems adopting both an institutional or informal role and responsibilities that go beyond the frameworks of humanitarian awareness and solidarity, which in fact are incentives for the aforementioned disabilities.

The above remarks create a framework which can trigger the development of an "Active Living for MH" movement. The main aim is not the creation of another entrenched process (such as the Special Olympics or Paralympics) but the recognition of sport and physical exercise contribution to the prevention and the rehabilitation of mental health, as the foundation of personal development and subsequently of the society progression.

"Active living" is part of the holistic approach that tends to become the prevailing perception for European Union 's policies in the Mental Health field.

Innovative aspects of the 1st European Sport & Physical Exercise Event for Mental Health pilot Event for Mental Health:

- Mixed participation of population with or without mental disorders.
- Combination of Sport and Physical Activities.
- No competitive concerns among the participants.
- The assessment of participation impact and the utilization of the results in therapeutic processes.
- Multiple choices activities instead of strictly structured sport programmes.
- Direct relation with the natural environment instead of activities that can be implemented only in sport premises.

Volunteers' participation and advocacy for the Rights of mental health services users are significant parameters of the Event concept.



Active living refers to a way of life that integrates a wide range of physical activity, such as walking, and sports into a daily routine.

The **ENALMH Network** intends to promote this approach by providing evidence to guide policy and intervention programs to maintain mental health, prevent mental disorders and attain wellness.