

The project

RECOVER-E (LaRge-scale implementation COmmunity based mental health care for people with seVere and Enduring mental ill health in EuRopE)

RECOVER-E is a European Commission Horizon 2020 project representing 16 partners from 11 countries; the project complements numerous ongoing efforts in mental health service delivery transformation and innovation in Europe. The project was launched on the 1st of January 2018.

The overall goal of the RECOVER-E project is to contribute to the implementation of and research on a community-based service delivery model for recovery-oriented care in five sites in five middle-income countries (Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Romania) to improve functioning, quality of life, and mental health outcomes for people with severe and enduring mental ill health (such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and/or severe depression).

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Consortium



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UNIVERSITATEA DE STAT DE MEDICINĂ
ȘI FARMACIE „NICOLAE TESTEMIȚANU”
DIN REPUBLICA MOLDOVA



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recover-e
Newsletter

March 2021



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This newsletter showcases a selection of updates from the RECOVER-E project. Keep reading to learn about what the implementation sites are up to and other relevant RECOVER-E activities.

Looking back at 2020

Though the global COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the project, the consortium worked hard and creatively to manage the project.

Training and mentorship for community mental health teams

RECOVER-E partners GGZ-Noord Holland Noord and Fundación Mundo Bipolar organised several online trainings for members of the Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs) across the 5 implementation sites during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Two trainings for all members of the CMHTs. The first training took place in November 2020 where participants learned about the organisation of care during a pandemic, about dual diagnosis, recovery-oriented care in action, and motivational interviewing. Training day 2 took place in December 2020 where participants learned about cognitive behavioural therapy, family interventions, recovery, treatment and crisis intervention plans.
- A two-day training for new members in Croatia's CMHT in December 2020
- A training specifically for peer workers in the CMHTs to learn more about their role, how to tell a recovery story, and about their important contribution to the team.

Zagreb, Croatia: Providing care in the face of adversity

“Croatian citizens, including our CMHT service users, have been faced both with COVID-19 and multiple earthquakes. In line with the recommendations of the Ministry of Health, changes to the organization of health care aimed to implement measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, significantly limited the activities of mobile psychiatric teams within the Department of Psychiatry and Psychological Medicine at University Hospital Centre Zagreb. Delivering care shifted to providing treatment mostly through remote online interventions or visits in open spaces in the summertime. At the University Hospital Centre Zagreb we also changed the structure of our CMHTs as some members were temporarily relocated to COVID-19 departments. We organised education for new members of the CMHT with the help of the project coordinators and included new members in the current CMHT to maintain provision of services. Despite all the adversities, having an option of providing care to our patients was an invaluable experience during this difficult time and our team continued to thoroughly support our patients.”

Suceava County, Romania: The pandemic offered an opportunity to engage more with service users

“Doctor/patient relationships in Romania are top-down with full diagnosis and treatment authority in the hands of the medical specialist. The classical care pathway starts with an appointment when necessary. The interaction will mainly consist of the patient answering questions and listen to directions from professionals with no further interaction until the next appointment. In March 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all appointments were cancelled resulting in a rise of anxiety and a sense of being deserted. However, the members of the CMHT provided the attention patients deserve by calling and inquiring about health status and needs, showing genuine concern and care for them as human beings that deserve care and attention. Slowly, patients felt empowered. To ensure they felt informed and important, patients were called on a constant basis. The initial authoritarian communication paradigm started to change into a real dialogue where the focus is patient wellbeing. The quality and the quantity of communication improved and can now be initiated by both parties; it is not constrained to the development of an acute phase or limited to taking a new medical prescription. Within this new communication framework, patients can initiate their inquiries and express freely. One of the most important developments is the communication between peers. Being isolated and anxious in their homes, everybody understood that communication is a vital part of personal wellbeing and that it does not matter how formal or informal the communication process is, as long as there is somebody at the other end who can listen to you and your worries. Home visits, in the Romanian culture, are formal and require preparedness beforehand. But due to the pandemic, we have changed formal scheduled home visits to non-formal phone calls, leaving time for the patients to express their opinions. Following lessons learned during these difficult times, we hope to be able to maintain quality non-formal communication that can at any time be initiated by our patients.”

Publications on RECOVER-E in the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations newsmagazine

- March 2020: [Interview with Laura Shields-Zeeman](#)
- July 2020: [Article on the RECOVER-E workshop EPA 2020 Virtual Congress](#)
- November 2020: [“Let's talk: Empowering Recovery in Europe” seminar by Guadalupe Morales](#)

Project meetings

The RECOVER-E consortium met twice in 2020 to discuss overall project progress, lessons learned, and strategies for future project implementation. The consortium met in Utrecht, the Netherlands in February 2020 just before the COVID-19 pandemic began, and online in December 2020. The project team benefitted from an inspiring debate in its December 2020 Steering Committee meeting by having a special session on sustainability of community mental health care, where Dr. Daniel Chisholm (Programme Manager for Mental Health, WHO Regional Office for Europe) and Dr. Soumitra Pathare (Director, Center for Mental Health Law and Policy, Indian Law Society and Member of the RECOVER-E Advisory Board) were invited to present on developments in community mental health care and potential opportunities for sustaining the results of the project. It was - despite being digital - a fruitful and inspiring meeting with interactive discussions.



A snapshot of RECOVER-E at conferences

The RECOVER-E project, a member of the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD) project network, participated in the GACD Annual Scientific Meeting that took place from the 10th to the 13th of November 2020. In addition to presenting overall project progress, the project also presented a session on policy engagement and mental health, led by project members Dr. Laura Shields-Zeeman and Dr. Raluca Nica. This was an interactive workshop on policy engagement drawing lessons learned from the RECOVER-E project, particularly Work Package 6 (Bridging the gap between policy and practice). It was a successful session with active participation of attendees from around the world involved in various projects covering noncommunicable diseases. The workshop covered policy influencing processes, how to identify stakeholders, and how to translate a stakeholder analysis to a policy influencing plan.

On the 12th of April 2021 RECOVER-E will present the workshop “Advancing Community-Based Mental Health Care in Europe: Early Findings and Lessons Learned from the RECOVER-E Project “ during the 29th European Congress of Psychiatry – EPA Virtual 2021.

Sofia, Bulgaria

Sofia’s Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) peer worker and the site project leader Dr. Vladimir Nakov presented at an international scientific conference organised by the College of Private Psychiatry in Sofia (25-26 September, 2020). The peer worker spoke about his experience with mental illness and reflected on working in the RECOVER-E CMHT. This was Bulgaria's first time having a joint conference presentation from a psychiatrist and a peer worker, together as a team.



Peer worker (left) and Dr. Vladimir Nakov (right)

The Bulgarian RECOVER-E team also presented the project in combination with the system of psychiatric care during the national conference Dimensions of Care Between Personal Experience, Social Regulations and Health Activism (28-29 September, 2020)

Scientific articles

A protocol paper describing aims and study design of RECOVER-E was published in the International Journal of Mental Health Systems. A second protocol paper on the health-economic evaluation component of RECOVER-E was published in JMIR publications.

We hope you enjoyed the RECOVER-E newsletter. Stay tuned for the next one!