

Celebrating World Mental Health Day

World Mental Health Day (WMHD) was celebrated for the first time in 1992 with the aim of providing international mental health education and awareness, as well as advocacy against social stigma and exclusion. Every year on October 10th thousands of advocates join their voices to bring awareness on mental health issues and their preeminent effects on peoples' lives globally. This year's WMHD comes at a time when people's everyday life has faced considerable changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this context and influenced by the spirit of this day we would like to bring light to the "Mental Health Matters through Restorative Art" (MHM) project, which we consider to be a very important initiative regarding the implementation of treatment in individuals with mental illness based on Art Therapy and Restorative Justice principles.

The idea of the project derives from the fact that in many countries, mental health challenges are the leading cause of disability. People suffering from mental illness and especially those who live in mental health structures are in the forefront of socially disadvantaged groups, suffering even more from social stigmatization and marginalization. These people often also suffer from societal injustice. As a result, there is an obvious need for more contemporary approaches, which will possibly enhance the understanding between patient and therapist and may increase the patient's mental health state and facilitate social inclusion.

MHM aims to respond to this by bringing together a cross-sector, strategic partnership to support innovation in the adult education field by creating, piloting, and disseminating educational material and tools tailored to the needs and realities of mental health professionals, restorative justice practitioners, and artists in the participating countries and across Europe. The project started in November 2019 and will be completed in October 2021.

Objectives of the project

MHM aims to enhance the skills, knowledge, and experience of mental health professionals using art and restorative justice values. MHM also aims to train artists to use art in order to facilitate the relief of mentally ill patients and their social restoration. The ultimate goal is to create innovative tools that enhance the healthcare provision and self-representation of those who live within mental health structures. Thus, the main aim is to create a methodological approach that puts together the benefits of art therapy with the values of restorative justice. MHM will also design and accredit e-courses that will enhance the skills and knowledge of adult learners, supporting in this way the setting up of, and access to upskilling pathways.

Training program: Restorative art in mental health structures

Restorative justice can have an empowering effect on mental health patients, breaking the stereotypical power-authority relationship, between the therapists and the patient while facilitating the relief of mentally ill and their social restoration. The potential and benefits of combining therapeutic art with restorative justice are still not translated into educational material and programs, leaving many adult learners and professionals in the field unaware. As a response to that, we are happy to announce that the MHM consortium is currently working on the creation of the training program: Restorative art in mental health structures. This particular training program will have the form of an e-course and will be addressed to mental health professionals, mental health structures' coordinators, mental health carers, other health care practitioners, and restorative justice practitioners.

The program aims to introduce mental health professionals to the values of restorative justice and give them a methodological approach that combines the therapeutic form of art with the restorative values and the power of art as a means of restoring injustice. Furthermore, the target group will be trained on creative art therapeutic approaches and the many expressions that these approaches might take within mental health structures for the benefit of people suffering from mental illnesses. The ultimate objective of the program is to lead to a healing, but also a self-representation, process for the people living in mental health structures. This training program is based on the findings of the "Training Manual: The use of restorative art in mental health structures", which was developed by the project consortium. The training program will be piloted in all participating countries and across Europe. Also, RJ4ALL, as a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) accrediting body, will accredit the CPD status of the program.

Find us on the Web

We are very excited to announce the launch of our newly designed website. Visit <https://mentalhealthmatters.eu/> to find out more about our project, to get informed about our news and activities, to read our publications, and stay tuned to get informed about the training sessions and the online tools that will be developed in the context of this project.

You can also find us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/MHMerasmus>. Through our Facebook page, you can have access to continuous updates on all the developments of the MHM project, as well as news related to the field.

The consortium is composed of 6 partner entities, the coordinator Restorative Justice for All (UK) and five other partners: Center for Social Innovation-CSI (Cyprus), Kinonikes Sineteristikies Drastiriotes Efpathon Omadon - EDRA (Greece), Lélekben Otthon Közhasznú Alapítvány (LOKA) (Hungary), Fundacion INTRAS (Spain), and Anotati Scholi Kalon Technon -ASFA (Greece).