



8th of September, 2022 (Vilnius)

POSITION STATEMENT: LITHUANIA'S LIVED EXPERIENCE

Introduction

People with Lived Experience (PWLE) from the workshop “Experts by Experience – Key Partners in Rethinking Mental Health Care”, held at the Rethinking Mental Health Care International Conference in Vilnius on 8 September 2022, drafted key recommendations towards the reform of mental healthcare in Lithuania, based on their lived experiences.

PWLE encounter the negative impact of stigma and discrimination at multiple levels and across various sectors, with limited recognition of their value, capabilities and expertise. There is also inadequate access to services that are aligned with recovery and human rights.

We acknowledge the efforts of the Ministry of Health of Lithuania for truly supporting the integration of PWLE in mental healthcare and taking positive steps towards achieving an inclusive approach to strengthen its mental health care system.

PWLE look forward to merging the current “us and them” divide into a united effort where “we”, as partners will build a better, more effective and efficient mental healthcare system in Lithuania, leaving no one behind.

PWLE should not be defined by a mental health condition or disability, but instead recognised for their abilities.

PWLE are enthusiastic about collaborating with all stakeholders, including but not limited to the government, policymakers, researchers, professionals, communities and family/carers. Our unique perspectives and expertise are complimented by empathy, passion and commitment to positively change the lives of our peers.

Recommendations

Addressing stigma and discrimination

- Drafting and enacting a Zero Tolerance Policy for discrimination against people with PWLE that are co-created by and with PWLE.
- Creating opportunities for PWLE to share their recovery journeys to reduce stigma. Such opportunities should ensure accessibility to safe spaces that prevent any risk of prejudice or consequences of harm to the individual.
- Anti-stigma programs should be targeted at the whole community, within and outside of the healthcare system and across age groups, with a specific focus on young people at basic and higher education levels.
- Mental health and wellbeing should be incorporated into basic school education curricula to encourage the normalisation of mental health and mental health conditions.
- Empowerment programs should be established for PWLE that will equip them to manage the impact of internalised (self) stigma, structural and public stigma.
- Raise public awareness on the defined roles and responsibilities of mental health professionals (psychiatrists and psychologists) to improve understanding for the general public about the methods of treatment of someone experiencing mental health problems, as this will help reduce the stigmatisation of people who are using such services and which may help encourage individuals to seek professional services when needed.

Create equal life opportunities

- Recognise and promote the abilities of people with lived experience within the field of arts and culture, sports and other fields that contribute towards the socio-economic development of Lithuania. This will aid in ensuring that PWLE are equal and “unlabelled” members of society with equal rights and equal employment possibilities and fair labour practices.
- Drafting a Workplace Mental Health Policy, co-created by PWLE, that holds employers accountable for unfair labour practices, human rights

violations and that promotes mental health and wellbeing of all employees.

Strengthening of mental healthcare services provision

- Reframe mental healthcare into a recovery and person-centred model that is community-based and involves a multidisciplinary team that can provide a comprehensive service package to anyone experiencing mental health problems. Such services should be accessible, free and continued in the public mental healthcare sector, private care should be affordable, and long-term formal peer-support should be available at all levels of care.
- Establish a support network for family and carers that could empower them through improved mental health literacy and self-care.
- Co-create a virtual hub (consolidated website) of all available mental health resources (public and private services and support, peer support services, information and self-help tips to promote wellbeing)
- All mental health professionals to receive training on best practices in recovery and person-centredness, and promote non-paternalistic approaches in their practices and adopt guidelines that provide alternatives to coercion.

Integrating lived experience into decision-making processes

- Ensure meaningful and authentic inclusion of PWLE in drafting and/or reviewing of legislation, policies and strategic plans pertaining mental health and sectors that directly impact on the lives of PWLE.
- Ensure diversity (vulnerable and disadvantaged groups) is applied when including lived experience representatives in decision-making processes, in the spirit of not leaving anyone behind.