



Eurodiaconia  | *Connecting faith
and social justice
through action*

MENTAL HEALTH INCLUSION REPORT

DECEMBER 2023



Funded by the European Commission under the ESF+ programme 2022 – 2025.
The Information contained in this document does not necessarily reflect the
position or opinion of the European Commission. Copyright 2023 Eurodiaconia
All rights reserved.

Eurodiaconia

TABLE OF CONTENT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHO WE ARE	2
ORGANISATIONAL VALUES	2
MISSION AND VISION	2
The Landscape of Mental Health in Europe: EU Initiatives, Stigma, and Accessibility Concerns.....	3
Eurodiaconia's Mental Health Inclusion Campaign 2023: Fostering Well-being and Empathy	6
MEMBERS MAPPING.....	9

WHO WE ARE

Eurodiaconia is a European network of churches and Christian NGOs providing social and healthcare services and advocating social justice.

ORGANISATIONAL VALUES

- Love
- Courage
- Dignity
- Hope
- Trust

MISSION AND VISION

Inspired by our Christian faith, our vision is of a Europe where social injustice is eradicated and each person is valued, included, and empowered to realize their fullest potential, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized.

Eurodiaconia is a network of churches and Christian organisations that provide social and health care services and advocate for social justice. Together we work for just and transformative social change across Europe.

Editor: Heather Roy

Authors: Donata Cagnato

THE LANDSCAPE OF MENTAL HEALTH IN EUROPE: EU INITIATIVES, STIGMA, AND ACCESSIBILITY CONCERNS

According to a report by the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately one in four Europeans experiences depression or anxiety each year (WHO, 2018). The repercussions are far-reaching, extending beyond individual suffering to impact economic productivity, healthcare systems, and social stability.

Eurodiaconia's dedicated focus on mental health is driven by a profound commitment to the well-being of individuals across Europe, recognizing the impact of mental health challenges on individuals, communities, and society as a whole. Our members, spread across the continent, play a pivotal role in addressing the diverse aspects of mental health by providing essential services and support to those facing such conditions.

In response to this increasingly important and complex issue, the [European Commission](#) has recently launched a comprehensive plan aimed at elevating the importance of mental health to the same level as that of physical health.

European Health Union: a new comprehensive approach to mental health

Spearheaded in 2023 by President Ursula von der Leyen, this plan resonates with the European Parliament's previous requests and public proposals. It adopts a cross-sector approach, recognizing that various factors—ranging from social, political, and environmental changes to digitalization and economic pressures—contribute to mental health conditions. It is guided by three foundational principles: prevention, access to quality and affordable mental healthcare, and societal reintegration following recovery and aims to mainstream mental health considerations across all policy sectors, thereby fostering a more holistic approach to public health.

With 20 flagship initiatives and €1.23 billion in EU funding from different financial instruments, the Commission aims to support Member States putting people and their mental health first. This could bring a new momentum to Eurodiaconia members' work on Mental Health.

Specific actions under this plan include promoting mental well-being through early detection and prevention strategies, capacity-building programs for healthcare professionals, and targeted

interventions for vulnerable groups. The plan also emphasizes the importance of good mental health at work, provides special focus on protecting the mental well-being of children and young adults, and outlines provisions for mental health support in humanitarian emergencies.

This initiative builds upon the earlier frameworks put forth by the EU, such as the "European Framework for Action on Mental Health and Well-being," and funding through programs like Horizon 2020. It complements existing schemes like the Joint Action on Mental Health and Well-being and the eHealth Action Plan, thereby adding a nuanced layer to the multi-faceted approach needed to tackle the mental health crisis effectively.

Objective one: changing perception

Stigma remains a persistent obstacle in mental health care, often deterring people from seeking help. Although considerable efforts have been made to raise public awareness and increase mental health literacy, much more needs to be done to change societal attitudes and perceptions. One such enduring obstacle is the stigma associated with mental health issues (Corrigan & Watson, 2002).

Discriminatory attitudes and misunderstandings which often discourage individuals from seeking professional help or even acknowledging their mental health needs. Public awareness campaigns and mental health literacy initiatives are crucial for mitigating the stigma (Henderson et al., 2016) and that is why Eurodiaconia run a dedicated campaign in 2023 to reduce stigma attached to mental health, but also bring more visibility to the work of members who, as shown in the mapping below, work unrelentingly to provide mental health services to a wide range of profiles such as people affected by dementia, migrant women struggling with trauma, young NEET and many more.

Objective two: access to quality affordable services

Equally pressing is the issue of equitable access to mental health services. While some Member States with robust healthcare systems offer reasonable accessibility, economic disparities—especially in less wealthy countries and rural areas—create significant barriers to quality mental health care (Thornicroft et al., 2017). These regional differences in the availability of mental health services compound the issue, leading to an inequitable distribution of care. Eurodiaconia

members provide a wide range of support services aimed at promoting mental well-being, preventing mental health issues, and providing assistance to individuals experiencing mental health challenges. These include individual and family counselling, peer support, crisis intervention services, rehabilitations services and more.

The mental health crisis in Europe is a multi-faceted issue requiring a unified, comprehensive approach. Although the European Union has laid the groundwork through coordinated policy frameworks, substantial funding for research, and technological initiatives, much remains to be done. Specifically, efforts to reduce stigma and ensure equitable access to mental health services must be continued and amplified. By delivering services, raising awareness, and actively participating in campaigns, Eurodiaconia's members are instrumental in fostering a society that prioritizes mental health, reduces stigma, and ensures accessible and quality mental health care for all. This report presents some of the good practices to be put forward to build a more resilient and mentally healthy European society. Only through sustained, collaborative efforts that address these enduring challenges can we pave the way for a more resilient and mentally healthy European society.

Did you know that...

1 In 4

will experience a mental health issue during their lifetime*

1 In 5

adolescents in Europe is affected by at least one psychological problem*

3 In 4

of European businesses report the presence on of at least one psychological risk in the workplace*

*Source Mental Health Europe, 2023

EURODIACONIA'S MENTAL HEALTH INCLUSION CAMPAIGN 2023: FOSTERING WELL-BEING AND EMPATHY

In 2023, Eurodiaconia initiated a comprehensive campaign to promote mental health inclusion across Europe. The campaign focused on increasing awareness, reducing stigma, and improving access to mental health services for individuals facing challenges. Utilizing a mix of social media engagement, a dedicated website hub, and monthly articles highlighting member services, Eurodiaconia aimed to drive practical change and advocate for a more understanding society.

Social Media Engagement: Facilitating Conversations

At the heart of the campaign was a deliberate and impactful social media presence. Across platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn, the campaign conveyed messages that resonated with diverse audiences. Visuals, narratives, and statistics were employed to encourage conversations about mental health.

Hashtags like #MentalHealthInclusion and #BreakTheStigma provided an avenue for individuals to share personal stories. The online space became a platform for open discussions about mental health journeys and a space for allies committed to destigmatizing the topic.

As part of this engagement, Eurodiaconia collaborated with Mental Health Europe (MHE) during the European Mental Health Week. This collaboration aimed to support MHE's impactful event, fostering increased understanding and awareness of mental health. The campaign encouraged the celebration of mentally healthy communities and addressed the social determinants impacting individuals facing mental health challenges.

Website Hub: An Informative Resource

The campaign drew strength from a dedicated website hub serving as a comprehensive resource for mental health information. The hub featured articles, resources, and testimonials, becoming a go-to source for those seeking information about mental health.

Designed to be inclusive, the website included various external resources as well updated information on Eurodiaconia and our members' work and social media toolkit. By making information accessible, Eurodiaconia aimed to empower individuals to seek help and engage in

meaningful discussions about mental health.

Click [here](#) to access the Mental Health Inclusion Hub.

Monthly Articles: Spotlighting Member Services

As part of the campaign, Eurodiaconia showcased member organizations through monthly articles. These pieces explored the unique programs and initiatives offered by different members, focusing on their impact on individuals facing challenges. The articles aimed to celebrate success stories while shedding light on ongoing challenges faced by both service providers and beneficiaries.

This series highlighted the diversity of mental health services within Eurodiaconia's network, fostering collaboration and mutual learning among members. The stories emphasized tangible outcomes and the ongoing need for support.

Advocacy and Impact: Continuing Efforts

Eurodiaconia's mental health inclusion campaign did not conclude with its planned activities. The awareness raised, conversations started, and partnerships formed during the campaign laid the foundation for ongoing advocacy efforts. By leveraging collective voices, Eurodiaconia continued to advocate for policies prioritizing mental health support, reducing disparities, and fostering an environment of acceptance.

Mental Health Webinar for member: "Prioritizing Mental Health: A Comprehensive Approach for a Healthy Europe".

On the 3rd of November 2023, Eurodiaconia hosted online webinar entitled "Prioritizing Mental Health: A Comprehensive Approach for a Healthy Europe." The webinar, conducted via Zoom, was an integral part of the Social Europe Academy series and aimed to provide essential training in funding and advocacy for Eurodiaconia members. The featured speaker for this session was Francesca Centola, a Policy and Knowledge Officer at Mental Health Europe. Centola's expertise was instrumental as she delivered an in-depth presentation focusing on the European Commission's new comprehensive approach to mental health, a cornerstone of the European Health Union.

“

Today, we stand at a crossroad for mental health in Europe. Our mission is to forge a path where mental health and wellbeing flourish, ensuring everyone, irrespective of their circumstances, has the support they need. - Centola

Centola's presentation emphasized that mental health is more than the absence of disorders. It involves a state of well-being where individuals can realize their potential, cope with life's stresses, work productively, and contribute to their community. This holistic perspective forms the basis for a more inclusive approach, moving away from the traditional biomedical model.

A significant highlight of the webinar was the discussion on the EU's policy developments in mental health, especially post-COVID-19. Centola highlighted the EU Communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health, adopted on 7 June 2023. The priorities outlined in this approach include integrating mental health across policies, early intervention, focusing on youth mental health, assisting the most vulnerable, addressing psychosocial risks at work, strengthening mental health systems, and combating stigma.

In conclusion, Eurodiaconia's Mental Health Inclusion Campaign 2023 was a multifaceted initiative that strategically blended practical approaches to catalyze transformative change. By leveraging the power of social media engagement, establishing a dedicated website hub, and regularly publishing insightful articles on member services, Eurodiaconia took deliberate steps to foster a more inclusive, empathetic, and supportive European society.

The campaign's impact extended beyond raising awareness, as it actively encouraged and sustained ongoing discussions regarding mental health. By providing a platform for open dialogues, the campaign sought to dismantle stigmas and misconceptions surrounding mental health issues. Moreover, Eurodiaconia's campaign went beyond rhetoric, emphasizing actionable steps and practical measures to drive change. The monthly articles highlighting member services not only showcased existing initiatives but also provided tangible examples of effective interventions and support systems.

By combining these various elements, Eurodiaconia aimed not only to shine a spotlight on mental health but also to lay the foundation for long-lasting change in societal attitudes and policies.

MEMBERS MAPPING

EURODIACONIA MEMBERS: WORKING FOR THE RIGHT OF MENTAL HEALTH FOR ALL

This mapping aims to provide an overview of the mental health services offered by our member organizations throughout Europe.

Through this resource, we aim to present a factual representation of the various initiatives and strategies implemented by our members to address mental health challenges. From community-based programs to specialized support services, this mapping serves as a guide to the diverse efforts undertaken by Eurodiaconia. We delve into the landscape of mental health services across our network, showcasing the practical contributions made by our members to promote mental well-being and inclusivity in their communities.

For a complete list of all the services our members provide please click [here](#).

1. FINDING FREEDOM THROUGH HEALING: A TRAUMA HEALING COURSE FOR MIGRANT WOMEN



[Member: Faith Integration in the Netherlands](#)

[Program: Freedom Focus](#)

Under the leadership of Reverend Esther van Schie since 2017, the Organisation of Faith Integration in the Netherlands launched the 'Freedom Focus' group course. This program aims to address trauma among migrants by integrating psychological methodologies with spiritual insights.

Upon arrival, migrants confront various challenges, including language barriers and intricate administrative processes. These challenges can intensify pre-existing traumas, potentially leading to conditions like post-migration syndrome. The evident need for tailored mental health resources for this group is paramount, especially considering that many migrants hail from cultures where seeking mental health services is uncommon. Linguistic and cultural differences further

complicate their access to Dutch mental health services. Additionally, there's a significant gap in accommodating the spiritual perspectives of migrants within mainstream services.

In response to this need, the International and multicultural church ICU in Gouda introduced the Freedom Focus program. While primarily designed for Christian refugee women, the program welcomes individuals from various religious backgrounds. Its curriculum blends psychological principles with biblical teachings on trauma and healing.

The Freedom Focus program, spearheaded by the Organization of Faith Integration, underscores the necessity of addressing the distinct mental health needs of migrants in the Netherlands. By melding cultural sensitivity with multilingual resources and spiritual insights, it stands as a complementary adjunct to traditional mental health services. The expansion of such initiatives to other migrant communities could effectively bridge existing mental health provision gaps, ensuring comprehensive and accessible support for all residents.



Figure 1 Picture provided by Faith Integration in the Netherlands

2. SLEZSKÁ DIAKONIE WORKING TOWARDS MAKING THE RIGHT TO MENTAL HEALTH FOR ALL A REALITY

Member: Slezská Diakonie

Program: Together in Uniqueness and Social Inclusion



Building on the importance of comprehensive support, Slezská Diakonie introduced the "Together in Uniqueness and Social Inclusion" project, funded by the European Social Fund, from November 2019 to May 2022. This initiative emphasized innovative approaches for the social inclusion of individuals with mental health issues and autism, with a focus on multidisciplinary strategies, professionalization, and public education.



Figure 2 Picture provided by Slezská Diakonie

The project had several components. Four social activation service workers received specialized O.T.A./Open Therapy Autism training, which uses positive responses from children with autism to encourage more effective social inclusion. In two regions, a multidisciplinary team was

formed to serve adults with mental health challenges, supporting a total of 186 individuals. This team, comprised of professionals ranging from psychiatrists to peer consultants, underwent further training in established social work methodologies, notably the CARE/Supportive Relationship Approach and Open Dialogue. These methods prioritize individual strengths and decision-making capabilities.

Furthermore, Slezská Diakonie offered 670 hours of expert support in alternative communication to 17 children with autism, aligning with mental health care reform standards. To raise awareness and promote a compassionate understanding of mental illness, public education initiatives were launched, including talks, workshops and two conferences.

The project's initiatives have positively influenced the lives of those supported and have elevated

the skill sets of social service professionals. Slezská Diakonie continues to promote best practices, fostering public comprehension and advocating for equality for individuals with disabilities.

3. LET'S TAKE CARE OF OUR MENTAL HEALTH: SLEZSKÁ DIAKONIE CAMPAIGN

Member: Slezská Diakonie

Program: Let's take care of our mental health



Highlighting the significance of community integration, Slezská Diakonie launched a campaign titled "Let's take care of our mental health" from March to October 2022. This initiative aimed to offer psychological guidance and coping strategies for daily challenges, with psychologist Mrs. Hana Wiselková at the forefront.



Figure 3 Picture provided by Slezská Diakonie

The organization enlisted the services of its lead psychologist, Mrs. Hana Wiselková, who served as the primary spokesperson and expert for the campaign. Each month, listeners and readers were invited to anonymously submit questions on a

designated topic. Mrs. Hana addressed these topics by answering the submitted questions through her podcast, drawing from her personal experiences and reflections to add depth to the discussions. These discussions spanned a range of topics, from interpersonal relationships and personal fulfillment to broader issues like national events and Christian values. Complementing this, Mrs. Miriam Szökeová, the spiritual ministry coordinator at Slezská Diakonie, provided insights on the role of Christian faith and hope in mental well-being.

The campaign received positive feedback, with listeners valuing Mrs. Hana's expertise and personal insights. Beyond the podcast, the campaign was promoted on Slezská Diakonie's digital

platforms and staff members were engaged to share relevant personal experiences.

The positive reception of initiatives like Slezská Diakonie's "Let's Take Care of Our Mental Health" campaign highlights the growing recognition of mental health as an integral aspect of holistic well-being in our communities. Such campaigns not only illuminate the complexities and nuances of mental health but also foster an inclusive environment where individuals feel seen, heard, and supported.

4. FINDING HAPPINESS AND PURPOSE THROUGH THE VAMOS PROGRAM

Member: Diaconess Foundation

Program: VAMOS program



For many young individuals, particularly those termed as NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), finding happiness can be elusive due to various challenges. Showcasing another effort towards inclusion, the Diaconess Institute's VAMOS program in Finland seeks to address this gap, targeting young NEETs aged 16-29, and aiding their reintegration into society.

VAMOS offers individualized support and coaching to its participants. This initiative has demonstrated success, with nearly half of its participants transitioning to employment or further education post-enrollment. Terhi Laine, the program's director, stresses the importance of individual coaching and peer support in achieving these results.

Erhan Daler, a former participant, attests to the transformative power of VAMOS, emphasizing the genuine human connection he experienced. Leveraging his journey, Daler has not only become an advocate for marginalized youth but also joined VAMOS as an experienced specialist, assisting others in similar predicaments.



Figure 4 Picture provided by Diaconess Foundation

The VAMOS program exemplifies a practical approach to addressing the challenges faced by

NEETs, enabling them to reclaim control over their lives and find happiness and purpose. Their success stories reinforce the importance of personalized support in mental health inclusion efforts.

5. UNITED TO SAVE LIVES: THE ZOÉ PROJECT BY DIACONIA ESPAÑA

Member: Diaconia España

Program: Zoé Project



Suicide in Spain claims an average of 11 lives daily, totaling over 80,000 attempts annually. In response to this pressing issue, Diaconia España introduced the Zoé Project, focusing on comprehensive suicide prevention measures.

The Zoé Project prioritizes public awareness, offering information on suicide detection and prevention. The goal is to instill a sense of collective responsibility in society. Diaconia España recognizes the significant role professionals play in suicide prevention. The project provides them with resources and training tailored to working with vulnerable social groups, encompassing refugees, migrants, trafficking victims and those at risk of social exclusion.

Beyond raising awareness, the project emphasizes the importance of institutional advocacy.

Diaconia España aims to highlight and address gaps in current prevention efforts, proposing solutions for a comprehensive prevention approach. With the principle of leaving no one behind, the Zoé Project emphasizes supporting vulnerable and often marginalized social groups, leveraging collaboration to offer specialized care. As an extension of the project, Diaconia España has a dedicated suicide prevention course. This initiative equips participants with tools and knowledge for effective intervention.

Diaconia España's Zoé Project provides a multi-faceted approach to suicide prevention, addressing the issue at multiple levels. Collaborative efforts can pave the way for a future where mental health support is universally accessible and the ramifications of suicide are significantly reduced.

6. EMPOWERING YOUNG MINDS: DIAKONIE AUSTRIA'S HOLISTIC INITIATIVES FOR MENTAL HEALTH INCLUSION

Member: Diakonie Austria

Program: In the Circus Wagon

Diakonie 

Shifting the focus to psychosocial rehabilitation, Diakonie Austria champions mental health inclusion for children and adolescents. With its specialized child and adolescent psychiatry hospital and the “In the Circus Wagon” program, the organization offers a comprehensive approach to mental well-being and societal integration.

Diakonie Austria’s hospital provides a therapeutic environment for children in need of mental health support. Catering to children from diverse backgrounds, including those with behavioral challenges and unstable home environments, the institution aims for their successful reintegration into society. Recognizing the significance of parental involvement, the hospital also provides educational counseling to parents, ensuring a collaborative approach to a child's recovery.

The hospital integrates a multidisciplinary team encompassing fields like medicine, psychology, occupational therapy, and more. Through consistent internal coordination and active collaboration with schools, Diakonie Austria ensures a broad-based approach to mental health care. The program offers children a therapeutic environment within a circus wagon, using puppetry to address emotional challenges. Recorded puppet interactions allow for in-depth therapeutic analysis, using play as a medium to promote healing and personal development.

Diakonie Austria’s initiatives underscore its dedication to mental health inclusion. Through specialized care and innovative therapeutic methods, the organization stands as a pillar for child and adolescent mental health recovery and societal inclusion.

7. MKO APOSTOLI'S MENTAL HEALTH MOBILE UNITS: NURTURING MINDS AND COMMUNITIES

[Member: MKO Apostoli](#)

[Program: Mental Health Mobile Units](#)



Furthering the discussion on mental health support, MKO Apostoli addresses the importance of mental health services through its Mental Health Mobile Units in Sparta and Crete. These units provide a comprehensive range of services, championing mental health and community integration.

In Sparta, the Mobile Unit offers preventive measures, diagnostic assessments, and treatments, supplemented by nursing, home care, and psychosocial rehabilitation. Emphasizing accessibility, it conducts bi-monthly visits to Molai Hospital, Neapoli, and Areopoli Health Centers, ensuring wider reach and inclusivity.

The unit fosters a collaborative atmosphere, facilitating support networks and skill development for beneficiaries and their families. Additionally, it extends support to vulnerable social groups, including financially challenged individuals and families with complex dynamics. The Ierapetra Day Center in Crete provides adults with personalized mental health assessments and treatments. Incorporating group activities, promotes socialization, creative expression, and overall well-being.

A significant part of MKO Apostoli's initiative is dedicated to de-stigmatizing mental health. Through community initiatives and awareness campaigns in local publications, they strive to foster understanding and empathy.

In reviewing the landscape of mental health services, the efforts of MKO Apostoli in Sparta and Crete are noteworthy. The organization's deployment of the Mental Health Mobile Units and its establishment of the Ierapetra Day Center demonstrate a structured and comprehensive approach to mental health care. These initiatives not only address immediate mental health needs but also contribute significantly to creating a more informed and supportive community environment.

8. MENIGHEDSPLEJEN I DANMARK: FINDING STRESS-FREE SOLACE IN THE CHURCH

[Member: Menighedsplejen i Danmark](#)

[Program: Manual to Hold Stressfree](#)



Stress affects approximately 430,000 individuals daily in Denmark, leading to significant mental health challenges. Taking a closer look at individualized support, Menighedsplejen offers church-based projects that blend the tranquility of religious settings with the therapeutic potential of nature, providing respite to those grappling with stress and mental health issues.

The Apostle Church in Vesterbro and Frederiksberg Church have launched projects like “Stress-free i Gårdhaven” and “The Stress-free Garden”. Participants engage in nature-centric activities, from gardening to crafting, followed by meditation sessions. These sessions, open to all irrespective of religious affiliations, emphasize guided presence exercises and optional Christian meditation.

To help churches initiate similar projects, the “Manual to Hold Stressfree” offers invaluable guidance. This manual serves as a roadmap for other churches, providing detailed strategies and methodologies to create supportive environments. By adopting these innovative initiatives, churches can become a sanctuary for those at risk of mental health illnesses, offering solace from the tumult of contemporary life and creating a connection to the peace and healing inherent in both nature and the church.

Participants of these projects consistently report marked improvement in their mental well-being. The initiatives offer them a non-judgmental environment, fostering a sense of community, which is particularly beneficial for those experiencing isolation due to mental health challenges.

Menighedsplejen's initiatives highlight the church's potential as a supportive environment for individuals at risk of mental health illnesses. Such programs not only offer immediate relief but also present a sustainable model for community-driven mental health support.

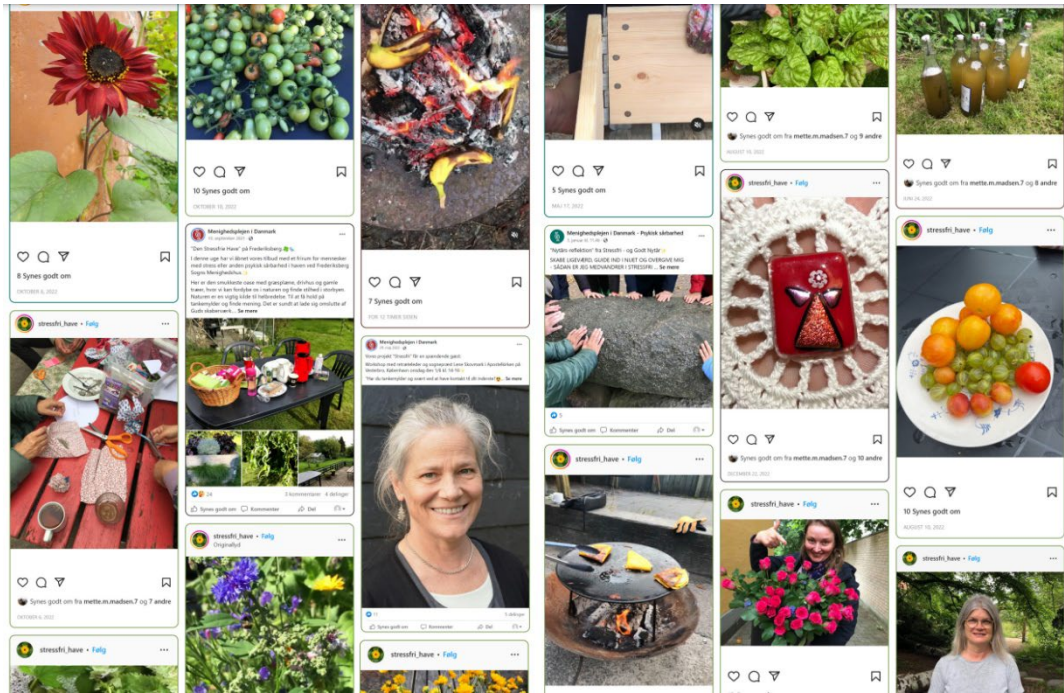


Figure 5 Picture provided by Menighedsplejen i Danmark

9. CISC PAD: FOSTERING MENTAL HEALTH INCLUSION

Member: [Timișoara Philanthropy Foundation](#)

Program: [Counseling Information Center for People in Difficulty \(CISC PAD\)](#)



In Timișoara, the Support and Counseling Information Center for People in Difficulty (CISC PAD) has emerged as a steadfast ally for individuals facing socio-professional challenges. Established in 2012 under the guidance of the Timișoara Philanthropy Foundation, the center has consistently offered unwavering support and understanding.

CISC PAD's mission is clear: to combat the various factors that contribute to social exclusion. Drawing referrals from diverse sources, including Romanian Orthodox Parishes and professional entities, the center has become an indispensable resource for those seeking guidance. What sets CISC PAD apart is its inclusive approach, welcoming individuals from all walks of life without prejudice.

In today's complex societal landscape, mental health issues are on the rise, and CISC PAD

acknowledges this reality. The center has tailored its services to prioritize mental health inclusion, providing psychological support that caters to the nuanced needs of marginalized individuals. For CISC PAD, mental health support goes beyond therapy; it's about creating an environment where individuals feel recognized, respected, and supported in their socio-professional journeys.

Moreover, CISC PAD's initiative to guide beneficiaries through various processes and connect them to essential services reflects a comprehensive strategy. The center aims for sustainable solutions, collaborating with the "Masa Bucuriei Program" and Selgros Timișoara store to address the fundamental needs of food and alleviate potential financial stresses for beneficiaries.

In essence, CISC PAD exemplifies the power of community collaboration in supporting those who need it most. Its focus on mental health inclusion not only addresses an urgent issue but also paves the way for a more inclusive and mentally resilient society. At a time when mental health priorities can be overlooked, the efforts of CISC PAD stand as a guiding light.

10. HEALING KOSOVO'S TRAUMA: A DECADE OF PROGRESS

Member: DIAKONIE KOSOVA

Program: Psychosocial center For Trauma therapy



In 2010, Kosovo confronted a formidable challenge: 22% of its population grappled with the lingering effects of a tumultuous past. It was during this critical juncture that an organization dedicated to healing took center stage, pioneering trauma therapy in the region. Now, a decade later, this organization has made significant strides in rehabilitating the lives of numerous individuals.

In 2010, Diakonie Kosova launched an initiative to address the profound trauma experienced by a significant portion of the population. Under the leadership of Psychiatrist for children and youth, Lutz Besser from Germany, a seasoned expert in trauma therapy, the organization embarked on a mission to make a difference. The organization initiated the provision of trauma therapy services from Monday to Friday, serving as a lifeline for individuals in key locations across Kosovo, including Mitrovica South, Mitrovica North, Prishtina, Fushe Kosove, and Prizren. This expansion catalyzed a wider reach, enabling them to deliver essential mental health support to those who needed it the most.

The journey of this organization would not have been possible without the steadfast support of various partners and institutions. The German embassy in Prishtina and the Foreign Ministry played pivotal roles in sustaining this vital work. Their unwavering support, extending until December 2024, has empowered the organization to continue its mission and leave a lasting impact.

Over the past decade, this organization has played a crucial role in healing the deep-seated trauma that gripped Kosovo. Through the dedication of its team and the support of its partners, it has helped individuals rebuild their lives, one step at a time. By offering trauma therapy services in multiple locations and training local therapists, they have created a network of healing that reaches every corner of the nation.



Figure 6 Picture provided by Diakonie Kosova

11. SLEZSKÁ DIAKONIE AND DIACONIA VALDESE: DEMENTIA FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES PROJECT



Members: Slezská diakonie and Diaconia Valdese

Program: Dementia Friendly Communities



In a collaborative effort, Slezská diakonie from the Czech Republic and Diaconia Valdese from Italy have jointly undertaken the "Dementia Friendly Communities" project, demonstrating a commitment to advancing elderly care practices. Slezská diakonie, renowned for its expertise in elderly services, particularly in dementia care, partnered with Diaconia Valdese for an Erasmus+ funded initiative. This collaboration underscores the role of network members in contributing to the evolution of elderly care strategies.

Central to the project's success is its collaborative and educational framework. Staff from Slezská diakonie engaged in valuable job-shadowing at Diaconia Valdese in Italy, gaining insights into effective practices within dementia-friendly communities. The exchange extended further with Italian experts sharing their knowledge in the Czech Republic, benefiting local staff and the broader community.

The outcomes of the "Dementia Friendly Communities" project are noteworthy. Slezská diakonie has seen improved service standards, particularly in catering to individuals living with dementia. The project facilitated the transfer of innovative dementia care methods, contributing to continuous improvement. Local staff and communities have gained enhanced skills, fostering a more informed and compassionate approach to elderly care.



Figure 7 Picture provided by Slezská diakonie and Diaconia Valdese

The collaboration between Slezská diakonie and Diaconia Valdese has not only resulted in practical advancements but has also strengthened international ties within our network, creating opportunities for future collaborative initiatives.

As the success of the "Dementia Friendly Communities" project continues, plans are underway for a new project starting in January 2024. This signifies an ongoing commitment to innovation and progress in the crucial field of elderly care, showcasing the transformative impact of collaborative efforts within the sector.

5 POINTS FOR BETTER MENTAL HEALTH POLICIES

- **Integrated Mental Health Policy Framework:** Advocate for the development and implementation of a comprehensive, integrated mental health policy framework at both national and European levels. This framework should encompass prevention, early intervention, treatment, and rehabilitation, emphasizing a holistic approach to mental well-being. The policy should be designed in consultation with mental health professionals, service users, and relevant stakeholders to ensure its effectiveness.
- **Reducing Stigma and Increasing Mental Health Literacy:** Implement targeted awareness campaigns and educational programs to reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues. Promote mental health literacy in schools, workplaces, and communities to enhance understanding and empathy. Encourage public figures, including policymakers, to openly discuss mental health challenges to contribute to a more supportive and understanding societal environment.
- **Equal Access to Mental Health Services:** Advocate for policies that ensure equitable access to mental health services across all Member States. Address regional disparities by investing in mental health infrastructure, particularly in rural and economically disadvantaged areas. Develop and support initiatives like telepsychiatry to improve accessibility for remote communities. Monitor and enforce standards for timely and appropriate mental health care.
- **Workplace Mental Health Initiatives:** Encourage the development and implementation of workplace mental health initiatives, emphasizing the importance of creating mentally healthy work environments. Promote mental health awareness programs, stress reduction strategies, and employee assistance programs. Collaborate with employers to establish supportive policies that address the mental well-being of their workforce and reduce workplace-related stressors.
- **Youth Mental Health Programs:** Prioritize mental health initiatives tailored to the unique needs of children and adolescents. Integrate mental health education into school curricula, providing students with the necessary tools to understand, manage, and seek help for their mental well-being. Support community-based programs that focus on early intervention and provide resources for youth facing mental health challenges. Foster collaboration between educational institutions, mental health professionals, and community organizations to create a supportive network for young people.

Eurodiaconia

2023

Contact

Tel.: ++32 (0)2 234 38 60
Email: office@eurodiaconia.org
Fax: +32 (0)2 234 38 65
Web: www.eurodiaconia.org



Rue Joseph II 166 – 1000 Bruxelles – Belgium



<https://www.instagram.com/eurodiaconia/>



twitter.com/Eurodiaconia



facebook.com/Eurodiaconia



linkedin.com/Eurodiaconia/



Funded by the European Commission under the ESF+ programme 2022 – 2025.
The Information contained in this document does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission. Copyright 2023 Eurodiaconia All rights reserved.