



A REPORT ON “ARTISTIC MINDS - NAVIGATING CREATIVITY, MENTAL HEALTH, & SUPPORT SYSTEMS” WEBINAR



PREPARED BY **Diliana Ancori, Policy Assistant**




Table of Contents

01 Vibrant Mind Project Description

02 Part 1 - Art as Expression and Experience

03 Part 2 - When Culture and Mental Health Come Together

04 Part 3 - Cultivating Support Through Art

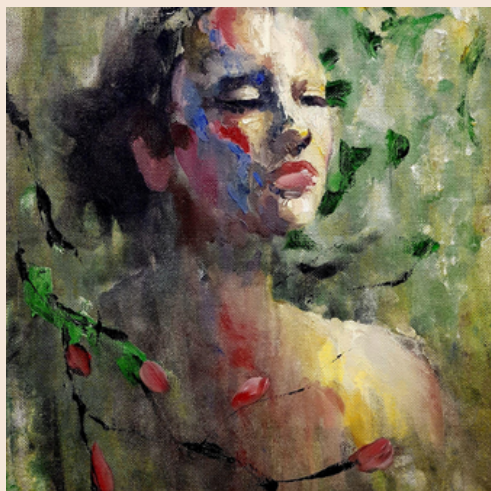
05 Vibrant Mind: Contacts and further information

01

Vibrant Mind Project Description

“**The Vibrant Mind: Exploring Mental Health Through Artistry**” is a pan-European project with as its final scope the one of **empowering individuals** living with mental health conditions through the **expressive power of art**. This project develops a platform where artists dealing with diverse mental health situations can display their work across a set of venues throughout Europe, from traditional galleries to patient organisations and more.

The "Artistic Minds" event, making its debut in Croatia, with an enthralling art exhibition, marks a pivotal moment in an ongoing transformative journey. The project results in a spotlight on the deep and intricate connection between mental health and the world of art. At the heart of this event's inception, Péter Kéri, the President of GAMIAN-Europe, opened up about his experiences with schizophrenia. By sharing his personal story, he underscored the vital importance of initiatives like these in fostering understanding and providing support to individuals navigating the challenges of mental health.

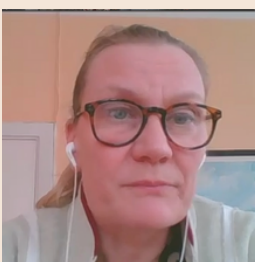
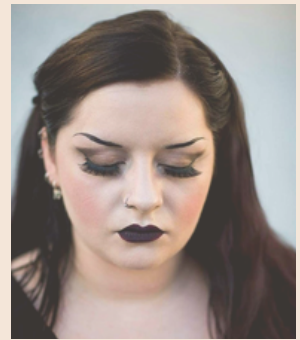


02 Part 1 - Art as Expression and Experience

Julia Pivén, Swedish artist, author, and lecturer in psychiatry, shared her experience of starting an **artist association** that evolved into a **mental health association**. She described her living with psychosis, and hallucinations and stressed how much people suffering from mental health conditions feel ignored, and distrusted. Accordingly, the artist stressed the importance of building trust with psychiatry and participating in society, including sharing with peers our conditions also in the context of international conversation.

In the words of Julia, *"Art is a way of living, a language, a way to think"*, something that enables her to partially sustain herself.

Artist Peter Johansson discussed how his condition shaped his passion for photography. he described how photography lets him to see things from different perspectives.

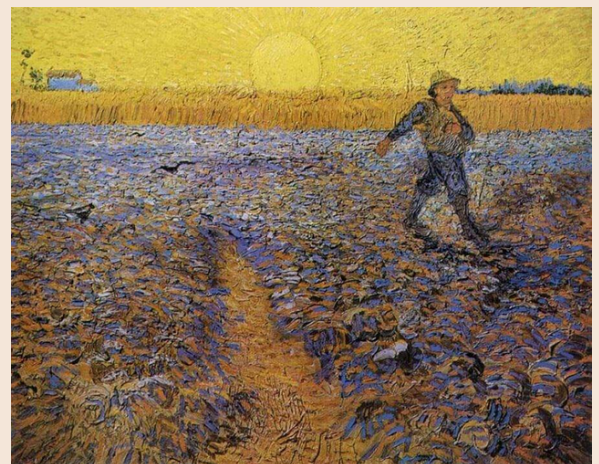


Åsa Konradsson Geuken, President of the Swedish Schizophrenia Association and associate Professor in Neuropharmacology, together with her brother Mats, explored the **therapeutic role of art** in dealing with schizophrenia. Mats's transition towards a more authentic artistic expression, affected by his condition, was a crucial point, offering insights into the complex relationship between creativity and mental health.

The webinar then shifted focus to **Vincent Van Gogh**, with Dimitra Stefanopoulos, from EUFAMI, who presented a talk on the life of the Artist and the relationship with his brother, Theo, being a sign of invaluable support and encouragement for him.

Dimitra highlighted Vincent's struggles and challenges in his artistic **career with mental illness** and how his **art reflected his emotional state**. The expert provided examples of works of art by Vincent Van Gogh and how they can depict his mental state. The vast landscapes, which could symbolise the inevitability of suffering, and the bedroom with the simplified forms and colors, reveal the turmoil of his domestic life.

Final thoughts were indeed shared dealing with the intersection of mental health, creativity, and familial support in the context of Vincent and Theo van Gogh's story.



03 Part 2 - When Culture and Mental Health Come Together

Maritina Kontaratou, from EDRA, talked about the **Art4MORE Festival**, an initiative since 2007 that intertwines visual culture with mental health advocacy.

Maritina described the project's aim of fighting the stigma and dissemination, raising awareness, and informing about mental health issues.

The unique *"Art Residences in Mental Health Units"* programme was also highlighted, underscoring the festival's innovative approach to mental health support.



Lars Münter, Director of International Projects, Danish Committee for Health Education (DCHE), discussed the varied applications of art therapy across Europe, stressing the significant differences in approach between countries.

He presented the **ART4ME project**, and the Erasmus+Project aiming at promoting mental health for adults through art therapy, highlighting the importance of mental health promotion by using creative arts methods and media.

He emphasised the importance of understanding and appreciating this diversity, rather than trying to impose a one-size-fits-all solution.

Despite its effectiveness and popularity, he also touched on the underfunding of art therapy. Lars expressed a desire to repeat the project, this time with a focus on integrating young people better and promoting their use of art for mental health.



Spiros Zorbas, from EPIONI, shared insights into the challenges faced by caregivers in Greece, advocating for national policies that take account of carers, promoting social inclusion, and acknowledging their significant contributions.

During the session, also a presentation on multiple events that EPIONI hosted and organised was provided, namely the coordination of **World Mental Health Day**, the yearly celebration for **European Carers Day**, including hosting an annual Arts and Mental Health Festival on the island of Aegina.

The discussion also covered the **strategic use of art therapy in psychiatric healthcare** and the potential of art in supporting mental health. Art therapy was presented as a set of activities embracing visual arts therapy, drama therapy, music therapy, dance therapy, and expressive arts therapy.



04

Part 3 - Cultivating support through art

Oriold Károly from LOKA, as Art therapist, and group analyst, developed the discussion by presenting **Art Therapy** as a tool in the complex psychiatric health care.



As an Art Therapist and Group Analyst, Oriold Károly delved into a thoughtful exploration of Art Therapy, presenting it as a multifaceted and powerful instrument within the realm of psychiatric healthcare.

Károly opened with a deep dive into the core of Art Therapy, borrowing the words of The American Art Therapy Association.

He painted an illustration of Art Therapy as a sanctuary of creativity for those grappling with illness, trauma, or life's hurdles, as well as for seekers of personal growth.



It's a process where the simple act of creating art becomes a reflective mirror, helping individuals to understand themselves and others better, navigate through the symptoms and stress, heal from trauma, sharpen the mind, and embrace the simple joy that comes from making art.

He carefully distinguished Art Therapy from the everyday social activities found in psychiatric wards.

It's not defined by the artwork itself, the euphoria of being in the zone, the chase for happiness, or the act of building.

David Somekh, Network Director of the European Health Futures Forum (EHFF), was a Psychiatrist dealing with people who were criminals, and with severe mental disorders, he emphasised the concept of the “**container**,” referring to the need for patients coping with these mental health conditions, to feel contained and secure.

He stressed the significance of relational security and the role of human interactions in understanding and helping those with mental health issues.

The conversation underscored the significance of relational security and personalised care in fostering a healing environment.

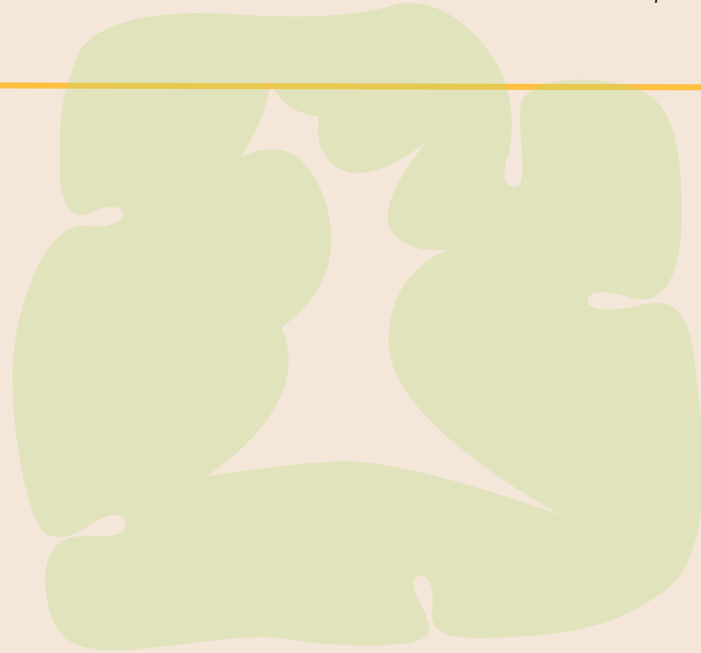
The Psychiatrist reported the example of a Canadian artist with mental health disorders. The author of the painting on the right, a frightening illustration that depicts a sense of anxiety and fear, with different images inside containing lots of disturbing things, such as violence, and animals.



The experts concluded by listing in practical terms how professionals could support the artist with mental health problems, namely, how to contain anxiety, going back to the concept of “container”, including helping the person suffering mental symptoms to feel understood.



*We thank you for your continued support
in our efforts to contribute to this project.*



Stay Updated
and Follow Us On Social Media



For any question or further curiosity about the
project, please do not hesitate to reach us out at:
communications@gamian.eu
assistant@gamian.eu
