



MENTAL HEALTH  
KEEP TALKING ABOUT IT

## Newsletter GAMIAN-Europe

April 2016

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Dear reader,

### Kind reminder:

Earlier this year, we have sent out a kind request to all members to pay GAMIAN-Europe's membership fee for 2016. Please endeavour to pay your membership fee of €150 before **Friday 22 April**. If you have not made the payment by then, you risk having a 20% interest bringing the total amount to €180. It is important for us to collect the membership fees in the first quarter of the year for the future running of the organisation. An invoice will be sent to you as soon as the payment has arrived in our bank account:

**ING Bank Marnixlaan 24  
1000 Brussels  
Belgium  
IBAN CODE BE 59 3900 4438 4326  
BIC CODE BBRUBEBB**

**Please let us know if there are any changes in your contact data. You can use the form on the website [here](#).**

*The editorial committee.*

### Foreword by

**Yoram Cohen (President)**



It is a time of change for GAMIAN-Europe: in January 2016 I was nominated as President instead of the late

Pedro Montellano; and on March 1 Nigel Emeka Olisa started as the new Executive Director, succeeding Paul Arteel.

More change: the Board has decided to rename GAMIAN-Europe's Good Practice Award as Pedro Montellano Good Practice Award; his wife Filomena will be invited to present this during the next Convention.

Other news: our collaboration with other organisations is becoming closer, especially with EUFAMI (European Federation of Associations of Families of People with Mental Illness) and EPA (European Psychiatric Association).

Hilkka Karkainen and myself represented GAMIAN-Europe at the EPA Congress in Madrid: I presented a paper and Hilkka was in charge of our information booth.

Our Regional Educational Seminar, taking place in Prague and

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addressing mental health and the migrants' crisis was a success; I would like to thank the Czech organisers as well as the participants. A report of the event can be found below.

We will have a special Board Meeting in Amsterdam to assess our past activities and look at the best strategies for the future of the organisation.

Last but not least, the unstable situation in Europe, especially in Brussels, Paris and Ankara has caused us to change the venue of our next Convention, which will now be held in Vienna. It will take place in conjunction with the ECNP seminar on 15-18 September.

Warm regards,  
*Yoram Cohen, President*



## GAMIAN-Europe's Thematic Seminar Mental Health and Migration *Bringing down the barriers*



Prague (Czech Republic)  
19 – 20 March 2016

Aim of the seminar was to address the impact of the current migration crisis on mental health, with participants reflecting and reporting on:

- the situation in their country
- how patient advocacy groups are involved
- good practices in their country



### Opening session

#### **Katrine Camilleri (Malta)**

provided detailed background information on the situation in Malta, which finds itself in the middle of the central Mediterranean route – one of the main routes for irregular entry into Europe. Malta has seen a steady increase in the number of people arriving by boat, and these boat migrants have special needs. In other European countries the rise in the number of asylum seekers has led to a sort of panic mode, with unilateral action (such as building fences) as a result. There are challenges on many levels, related to how we receive these asylum seekers and how we respond to them. The EU response is raising questions, as fear motivates this response; and fear is not a good leader.

**Tereza Nus (KOLUMBUS)** read out two supportive messages: one from Miluse Horska (Vice-President of the Senate) and Lenka Ptáčková Melicharová (Deputy Minister for Health Strategy), both expressing their support for the seminar and wishing GAMIAN-Europe well in their efforts to advocate for recognition of the importance to address mental health and put in place appropriate services for those affected by mental health issues.

**Tomas Zdechovsky MEP** expressed his concern and interest in the topic of mental health, most particularly in relation to migrants and refugees. He underlined the



vulnerability of refugees to stress, anxiety and Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome and expressed his strong interest in working with GAMIAN-Europe to raise awareness in the European Parliament of this specific issue, for instance by means of tabling a Written Declaration. All too often, it is forgotten that we are talking about people, and the traumas these people have endured are not talked about at all. With his background as a street worker working with Roma, Tomas Zdechovsky is well aware of the problems and is determined to make sure that there is attention for these traumas. After all that people have endured along the way, the second traumatisation occurs when there is no perspective in the arrival country. A strategy is needed now as immigration is going to be a sustained problem.

### Countries reflecting on the situation/development in their country

**Daniel Czernik (Czech Republic)** presented the situation in his country, where strong voices against refugees can be heard. There is a refugee camp in Bělá pod Bezdězem, where 9 refugees with their children are living. The living conditions are good and people are protected.

There are not many refugees in the Czech Republic as most refugees are more interested in countries like Germany or the UK. Daniel works as a social worker and personal assistant and supports mentally ill people and disabled people. He would certainly help refugees if he would meet them in the street or in the psychiatric clinic where he works. The KOLUMBUS help line has received calls from patients who are afraid because of the migrant's crisis – so the current situation has an impact on patients. Refugees themselves have not made use of this facility yet.

**Marcella Barova (Slovakia)** started by presenting her organisation, ODOS, which focuses on themes like stigmatisation of mental health, improving the quality of life of patients and social integration. Patient advocacy and education of patients and family members are also very important. ODOS produces information leaflets, communicates with the media and offers direct support to families. The organisation is also involved with an EU



funded education project about patients in hospital – Mental Health Europe is also participating.

**Dagmar Breznošćáková, (Slovakia)**

explained that in her country, a variety of different authorities are involved with the migration authority. Some psychological assistance is offered to asylum seekers but this is very limited.



Specific project helping asylum seekers exists, with some 7 organisations involved, including the Human Rights Council of which ODOS is a part. The number of refugees applying for residence is very limited – most want to get to the West.

**Dimitrij Marusic (Slovenia)** presented the situation in Slovenia and his organisation, OZARA Slovenija Nacionalno. This offers different forms of psychosocial rehabilitation and support to people with mental health problems. Main programmes focus on counselling, residential groups and day centres. Prevention is another focus point. In Slovenia, non-governmental and humanitarian organisations are actively involved in providing assistance to refugees. SLOGA, a platform of non-governmental organisations, is coordinating NGO activities and humanitarian organisations, while Slovene Philanthropy is coordinating the collection of individual's contributions.

**Istvan Gallai (Hungary)** presented his personal opinions on migration and the current crisis as well as those collected from two 'Hearing Voices' Self-help Groups.

Related to facts, feelings and reactions **concerning the migrants**, Istvan *himself* has empathy and feels sorry for these refugees; he would like to help them as it is a tragedy for them (and also for us). The *self-help* group response was mixed: there were some positive opinions but they are mostly negative ones, expressing fear and insecurity but also some empathy. **Concerning the Hungarian people**, Istvan *himself* faces a dilemma as he is worried about the effect of the migration on Hungary; he feels fear and doubt about dealing with potential terrorists, the effect on the society and on the patients, the effect of closing borders and questions about whether refugees are exploiting the Hungarians. The *self-help*



groups also expressed a variety of feelings, mostly related to pessimism, fear and hopelessness. Related to facts, feelings and reactions **concerning Europe**, Istvan again faces a dilemma and fears concerning the EU. There

is no shared point of view, no common approach. The *self-help* group also expressed pessimism and criticism.

**Evangelos Asprogerakas (Greece)** provided information on the situation in Greece. Most of the people coming into Greece via Turkey are refugees, and some are immigrants (for economic reasons). They are exhausted, traumatised and without money because of smugglers and extortion by people in the transition countries. The Greek government confronted this issue and is building little houses for the refugees; some 20 houses are built each day. However, this is by no means sufficient for the vast numbers of



people coming into Greece (on average 1500 a day). These houses are built with Greek money; the EU did not contribute and other countries did not respond to Greece's call for help. There is a huge difference between the ways Greece and Turkey are treating the refugees; many Greeks are extremely helpful.

Evangelos also showed some videos to underline the hardship of the refugees.

**Daniella Calleja Bitar (Malta)** described the situation in Malta. There is only one mental health hospital in Malta where refugees from the detention centres get transferred to in case of attempted suicide. It is clear that the mental health of refugees deteriorates as a result of their experiences during the journey and upon arrival.

A comprehensive report on the conditions faced has been prepared on 'Care in captivity' and one of the striking findings was that the camp was actually better than the hospital. However, the ward is being improved. One of the ongoing projects in Malta relates to the provision of mental health first aid: it is now possible to train and get a license as a mental health first aider. Daniella showed an interesting video on this project and underlined that psychological first aid will be the theme for this year's Mental Health Day.

**Raluca Nica and Maria Mitica (Romania)** provided information on the situation in Romania, showing some strong images of refugees in inappropriate boats. Children are obviously the most affected, and these children will bear this trauma throughout their lives; they are at risk of serious mental health problems later in life.

It is a new phenomenon for many countries and brings insecurity and fear. How can we get over this fear? In many cases, it is not so much the problem of immigration but of politics of the right and left – and the issue is also used to gain votes. Dignity and equality should be the key words and this is what GAMIAN-Europe is about.

Good practices in the field of mental health in their countries.

The second day of the seminar focused on the good practices in a few countries.

For more details click [here](#)

At the end of the second day, participants expressed positive opinions of the seminar, having enjoyed sharing experiences and thoughts with like-minded individuals and organisations. All expressed an interest in further cooperation on the topic of mental health and asylum seekers and other mental health issues, such as stigma.

For the full report click [here](#)



**Thanks to KOLUMBUS and its members who helped in hosting "Bringing down the barriers" seminar.**



## Upcoming events

### Next Meeting of the European Parliament Interest Group on Mental Health, Well-being and Brain Disorders

The next meeting of the European Parliament Interest Group on Mental health will take place on 4 May and will address 'Mental health and the migrants' crisis'. Background to the meeting is the unprecedented number of individuals and families currently coming from the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia to find safety and security in Europe. At this point in time, hundreds of thousands of individuals - legally defined as refugees, asylum seekers and migrants - are on the move within Europe on their way to a destination country. These migrants have a multitude of needs and some of these needs are being recognized. However, attention must also be given to the protection of their mental health and psychosocial well-being.

For access to the registration form, click [here](#)

**International ISBD ISAD conference 'Challenging Moods'**  
(Conference about Depression and Bipolar Disorders)  
*Amsterdam.*  
*July 13-16, 2016,*

For all details, see our [website](#)

**GAMIAN-Europe's Annual Convention and General Assembly**  
*Vienna (Austria)*  
*16 - 18 September 2016*

**29th ECNP Congress**  
*Vienna (Austria)*  
*17 - 20 September 2016*

More details, click [here](#),

## EU News

by Christine Marking (GAMIAN-Europe EU Liaison)



### 'Written Declaration on mental health and asylum seekers

As a result of the Prague regional seminar, taken place in March, GAMIAN-Europe has prepared the first draft of a Written Declaration, which is intended to be tabled in the European Parliament as soon as possible. In order to be adopted, 376 MEPs will need to sign the Declaration. Tomas Zdechovski MEP, present in the Prague meeting, has already expressed his willingness to support this process. It calls on the Council of Ministers, the Commission and the Parliaments of the European Union

- to take account of the mental health needs of asylum seekers and to show compassion for their plight;
- to recognise and address Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome;
- to ensure sustained provision of support and services in order to prevent mental ill health and address problems when they arise.

### Joint Action on Mental health and Well-being comes to an end - What next?

The Joint Action for Mental Health and Well-being was formally closed at a conference on 21 February, which was attended by GAMIAN-Europe Board members Yoram Cohen and Raluca Nica. Launched in 2013, the Joint Action

aimed to build a framework for action in mental health policy at EU, taking into account the work developed under the European Pact for Mental Health and Well-being. The Joint Action involved 51 partners representing 28 EU Member States and 11 European organisations and addressed issues related to five areas:

- promotion of mental health at the workplaces;
- promotion of mental health in schools;
- promoting action against depression and suicide and implementation of e-health approaches;
- developing community-based and socially inclusive mental health care for people with severe mental disorders; and
- promoting the integration of mental health in all policies.

As a result, an endorsed framework for action – the European Framework for Action on Mental Health and Well-being - was developed, which includes a number of recommendations for action in each of the 5 areas. For more information: click [here](#)

### **What next?**

GAMIAN-Europe would like to ensure that the recommendations that have been developed as part of the Joint Action on Mental health and Well-being will be implemented and put to concrete use. Despite the Commission announcing the ‘stronger involvement’ of the EU-Compass for Action on Mental Health and Well-being to support dissemination of the Framework, monitor mental health and wellbeing policies and activities by Member States and non-governmental stakeholders and organise reports and meetings GAMIAN-Europe believes that there is a need for a more concrete and ambitious approach.

Concrete policies and strategies now need to be put in place, and while useful, it is doubtful that the work of the Compass will be able to stimulate and ensure this. This is why GAMIAN-Europe has developed a blueprint for a European Action Programme on Mental Health, which will be used in our EU –level advocacy efforts. Reasoning behind the Action Programme:

- There are EU level precedents for more ambitious actions in specific health areas (e.g. cancer, rare diseases) where the Commission has put a great effort into ensuring concrete national action plans.
- A more ambitious approach would also be in line with the expected outcomes of the Joint Action, which aimed to ‘build capacity of national mental health leaders and other stakeholders in mental health policy

development and the creation of mechanisms supporting a structured collaboration between key actors in the implementation of mental health policies in Europe’.

The Action Plan builds on the areas as already addressed by the European Pact for Mental Health and the Joint Action and has five main strands for work:

1. **Inclusion of mental health as a priority in health and social policy development: mainstreaming:** The Joint Action specifically refers to the need to explicitly include mental health in all areas that have a direct or indirect bearing on mental health. A number of current and future EU-level programmes and policy priorities which could (and should) have a mental health focus are being proposed.
2. **Awareness-raising and good practice exchange: mutual learning and exchange:** The EU action programme could ensure and coordinate an effective exchange of information, experience and good practice between relevant stakeholders and Member States in relation to the 5 work streams already identified by the Joint Action.
3. **Stimulate the development of national action plans on mental health and well-being:** As already referred to in the 2011 Council Conclusions, national action plans on mental health could be put in place, taking the 5 themes of the Joint Action as their basic work streams, and using the existing national actions plans on cancer and rare diseases as models.
4. **Financial support:** a number of the above initiatives hold the potential for funding (e.g. the health programme, the structural funds, Horizon2020). This funding could contribute to capacity building of mental health organisations and support the exchange of information and research.
5. **Data collection and monitoring:** the Horizon2020 programme could issue specific calls for research projects addressing mental health in future calls for proposals under the action ‘Tackling Societal Changes’, section ‘Health, demographic change and well-being’.
6. **Inclusion of people affected by mental health problems in relevant EU consultations, fora and Advisory boards :** any strategy of policy addressing mental health should be developed as a joint efforts by

all key stakeholders from societal and policy sectors concerned

*The full text of the Action Plan will be available on the GAMIAN-Europe website soon.*



## GAMIAN-Europe's News Flash

***“How can lay organizations in the field of psychiatry work with the basic scientists and the clinicians to fight psychiatric disorders ?”***

Article from Raluca NICA, (Chair, Research Committee, GAMIAN Europe, Romanian League for Mental Health, Bucharest, Romania) in ERA-NET neuron newsletter. You can read this [here](#).

### ***Translation of Brain Research into Clinical Practice***

KINAPSI held a one-day meeting entitled "Translation of Brain Research into Clinical Practice". The objectives of the event were to increase public awareness of the progress and benefits of brain research, and specifically to raise awareness of the recent advances made in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of Schizophrenia and Dementia. The Meeting took place in Athens on Tuesday March 15th 2016. The aim was to give participants a very clear understanding of the importance of Basic Research in Neuroscience. The program included a Lab Visit, the purpose of which was to familiarize people with mental health problems and their carers with current neuroscience research in Greece.

The meeting was held under the auspices of the Hellenic minister of Health, Hellenic Psychiatric Association, WFMH & European Brain Council.

### ***EPA Congress, Madrid, 12-15 March 2016***

#### ***GAMIAN-Europe was there !***

It was the 2nd time for GAMIAN-Europe to be represented at the EPA (European Psychiatric Association) Congress. The theme of this year's EPA Congress was: "Towards a common language in European psychiatry".

The Congress venue was the Palacio Municipal de Congresos and the Exhibition Hall was the Espacio Polivalente. Our president Yoram Cohen presented GAMIAN-Europe's point of view, in different topics during this congress. The three themes that were covered by Yoram :

*'Patients' and Relatives' View on European Psychiatry'*

*'Value in Mental Healthcare: The Patient Aspect'.*

*'Seven years after the UNCRPD – ideals and realities'.*

Hilkka Karkainen looked after our booth that attracted many interested people attending this conference.

For the full presentations, mail to [cohen.yordv@gmail.com](mailto:cohen.yordv@gmail.com)

#### ***Want to know a bit more about the 'Finnish Open Dialogue method' ?***

Click [here](#) for a short explanatory film.