



NGO's NETWORK FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL REHABILITATION AND MENTAL HEALTH «ARGOS»

Lobbing Greek and European authorities: The experience of ARGOS' Network

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ARGOS' Network

- ARGOS” is an informal network of 36 NGOs, non-profit making Legal Entities of Private Law (LPPLs) which was established in 2005.
- The members of ARGOS network contribute with the authorization of the Greek State to the de-institutionalisation and the psychosocial rehabilitation of mental patients and the reform of the mental healthcare system as it is required and imposed for moral, scientific and common EU policy reasons following the principles of Social and Community Psychiatric

ARGOS' Network

The basic aims of ARGOS network are:

- The documentation and promotion of the scientific and social work and results of its members.
- The improvement of the collaboration and the support among its members under the principles of the social psychiatric and the psycho-social rehabilitation.
- The dissemination of the scientific know-how.
- The promotion of collaboration with other institutions in local, national and international level.
- The organization and implementation of training and informative scientific activities.
- The protection of the rights of mental health patients
- The formulation of proposals for the improvement of mental health services and the design of policies in the field of mental health.

ARGOS' Network

- The main responsibility of the design and the implementation of the activities of ARGOS network, according to the memorandum of the network have the coordination committee which is elected every 2 years by the general assembly and consists of 7 members.
- Under this framework ARGOS Network implements official contacts, press conferences, publications, scientific events, research and evaluation activities, training meetings, demonstrations and networking activities.
- During the last 6 months we trying to transform the informal network to a Formal association of legal entities

ARGOS' Network

- The foundation of ARGOS Network took place at the same time with the beginning of a long-term crisis in the mental health sector of Greece due to the limited funding by the Greek State of the rehabilitation units.
- After 2004, when the European finding period was completed for the most of the units, the Greek Ministry of Health begins to limit the foreseen and agreed upon funding from the Government Budget.
- The treatment of this crisis is the main field of networking and lobbying activities of ARGOS' Network

The mental health crisis in Greece

- Till 2004, thanks to the efforts of the mental health professionals in our country and EU funding, substantial progress has been made in the field of psychiatric services. Some psychiatric institutions have been closed down, while the creation of community-based structures (hostels, sheltered apartments, day centers) has ensured accommodation, support and human living conditions to thousands of former inpatients.
- Due to the decrease in the funding and the lack of political support, the standards and performance of the hostels, naturally decreased as well, some of the patients regressed and the employees can no longer work with the same enthusiasm as before, as they do not receive their monthly salaries regularly.

The mental health crisis in Greece

- The unjustifiable and systematic refusal of the Minister of Health to fulfill the financial obligations towards the Psychosocial Rehabilitation Units, despite the recommendations of the European Union, puts thousands of people with mental health problems at direct risk.
- Over the past four years, all these problems regarding the funding (in 2008 funding was down by 50%) of the Psychosocial Rehabilitation Units operated by Non-Governmental Organizations (Scientific Associations), lead psychiatric reform to a dead end.

The mental health crisis in Greece

- The mental health professionals are left unpaid over the past five months while still working. The Units are unable to cover even their daily operating expenses, with consequences on the quality of care. If this situation goes on, the Rehabilitation Units risk terminating their operation in the near future and the people with mental health problems risk to be transferred back to the psychiatric institutions.
- Already, after an official accusation by the ARGOS Network, the Ombudsman has blamed the Ministry of Health for deficiency in the provision of care to mental health patients accommodated in Psycho-social rehabilitation units

The mental health crisis in Greece

- The Greek Ombudsman points out that under these circumstances the vision of Psychiatric Reform is in danger of collapse and the basic aim of PSYCHARGOS program which was financed by the European Union has been abandoned and a systematic violation of the human rights of citizens with mental illness is taking place.
- The Greek Ombudsman points out also that are being violated all the rights that are clearly mentioned under the principles included in the European Commission's Green Paper on Mental Health.

The mental health crisis in Greece

- After the inform of the European Commission by the ARGOS Network regarding the violation of the human rights of citizens with mental illness, the European Social Fund has decided as a safeguard measure to interrupt the treatment of the interim payment request submitted by the Greek Ministry of Health until this issue is totally settled.
- In this framework representatives of the European Commission have investigated the situation and pointed out our suggestions for the improvement of the mental health care system in Greece.

The mental health crisis in Greece

- On the 6th of April we met Commissioner Mr. Spidla and representatives of ESF and we presented the situation in Greece, the Mental Health Crises and our suggestions.
- On the 7th of April Commissioner Spidla and the Greek Minister of Health signed a new agreement regarding the the continuation of psychiatric reform in Greece in which the most of our demands have become statements of the Greek authorities and the European Commission. By this agreement the European Commission has canceled all the official policies of the Greek Government of the last 4 years and gave emphasis on the qualitative continuation of the Psychiatric reform following the principles of Social and Community Psychiatric.

The possible end of mental health crisis in Greece

Analytically according to the new agreement between the Greek State and the EU the following commitments have been signed:

- A new road map for the development and the completeness of the psychiatric reform will be prepared till the end of June and a new steering and monitoring committee will be established by the EC in order to monitor the reform and to report its progress to EC every 6 months. The positive reports will be requirements for the continuation of the funding from the EU.
- A big number of mental health professional will be employed mainly at the Mental Health Centres.
- A strict timetable has been agreed and the completeness psychiatric reform has been assigned at the end of 2015.
- A new administrative and monitoring system will be establish together with the evaluation system for all the mental health units.

The possible end of mental health crisis in Greece

- The government has taken the responsibility to pre-pay every 3 months all the necessary money to the NGOs through a budget line of the State Budget and to ensure in the beginning of each year the 100% of the necessary funds.
- The funding of the Social cooperatives will be continued till the end of the 2013. Also a supporting unit will be established and the government will take a number of supporting measures in order to promote the cooperation between social cooperatives and the state and to implement the EU directive n.18/2004 regarding the supply of the State with services and products of the social cooperatives.
- All the NGOs will be certified by the State and after that they will sign contracts with the State.

Lobbying and Networking Activities of ARGOS Network

The lobbying activities of ARGOS Network are focused on:

- **Local level**
- **Regional level**
- **National level**
- **European level**

Lobbing and Networking Activities of ARGOS Network in local level

The activities of ARGOS Network in local level are focused on:

- **Increasing awareness of the local communities**
- **Informing the local communities for the situation and the negative impact of the crisis**
- **Lobbing with the local media**
- **Lobbing with the local social partners**
- **Lobbing with the local scientific associations**
- **Lobbing with the local authorities**
- **Lobbing with other social NGOs**
- **Lobbing with the local Health care and Social services**

Lobbying and Networking Activities of ARGOS Network in local level

The activities of ARGOS Network in local level are developed through:

- **Developing common information campaigns with local authorities regarding mental health**
- **Building relationships with the local media in the base of provision of scientific articles**
- **Participating in a variety of local events (cultural, social and political events)**
- **Informing all the key actors for the necessity of community based mental health care services**
- **Organizing focused events on the mental health**
- **Organizing demonstrations with the participation of the community**

Lobbing and Networking Activities of ARGOS Network in local level

Lobbing methodology

- Inviting the mayor and the members of the town council to all the activities of the NGOs, asking them for a speech
- Contacting all the key actors and developing communication channels, emphasizing in the social impact of our activities
- Identifying the main key persons and establishing relationship with them by promoting the social and humanitarian options of our services
- Providing regularly information regarding the situation in the mental health

Lobbing and Networking Activities of ARGOS Network in regional level

The activities of ARGOS Network in regional level are focused on:

- **Increasing awareness of the regional community**
- **Informing the regional community for the situation and the negative impact of the crisis**
- **Lobbing with the elected members of the parliament from the region**

Lobbing and Networking Activities of ARGOS Network in National Level

The lobbying activities of ARGOS Network are focused on:

- **Lobbing with all the political parties**
- **Lobbing with members of the parliament**
- **Lobbing with Greek members of the European Parliament**
- **Lobbing with the media**
- **Lobbing with the social partners**
- **Lobbing with the scientific associations**
- **Informing the officers of the independent Authorities (Ombudsman, National Committee of human rights, National committee for the protection of the rights of the users of mental health services.**
- **Lobbing with the trade unions of the employees in the health sector**

Lobbing and Networking Activities of ARGOS Network in European Level

The lobbying activities of ARGOS Network are focused on:

- Lobbing with all the European political parties
- Lobbing with Greek and foreign members of the European Parliament
- Lobbing with the European media (BBC, Guardian)
- Lobbing with the European social NGOs
- Lobbing with the European scientific associations
- Lobbing with the officers of the European Commission and ESF
- Lobbing with European Networks (MHE)
- Informing Regularly the Commissioner of Employment and Social Affairs
- Informing the Human Rights Committee of the Council of Europe and of the European Parliament
- Informing WHO

The main Lobbying and Networking Activities of ARGOS Network

- Organization of Pan Hellenic meeting with the social partners for the support of the Rights of the users of mental health services and the signed of a national declaration for the promotion of Psychiatric Reform (25-1-09)
- Participation in the Round Table organized by MEP Mrs. Evagelia Tzampazi at the European Parliament “The psychiatric reform in Europe: the case study of Greece” (27-1-09).
- Official meeting with the representatives of ESF which were responsible for the investigation of the situation of Mental Health in Greece (13-2-09)
- Organization of a demonstration against the Ministry of Health (4-3-09)
- Official meeting with the President of the Hellenic Republic Mr. Karolo Papoulia in order to inform Him for the situation of Mental Health in Greece (5-3-09)

The main Lobbying and Networking Activities of ARGOS Network

- Official meeting with the President of PASOK Mr. George Papandreou in the framework of the social dialogue for the Mental Health (26-3-09)
- Official meeting with the President of Synaspismos Mr. Aleko Alavano in order to inform him for the situation of Mental Health in Greece (1-4-09)
- Organization of a concert of protest in the Center of Athens (4-4-09)
- Official meeting with Commissioner Mr. Spidla and representatives of ESF and we presented the situation in Greece, the Mental Health Crises and our suggestions (6-4-09).