



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

How to lobby national/local/regional authorities?

The experience of ARGOS' Network

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MENTAL HEALTH EUROPE
NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS TRAINING
Athens, 19-20 February 2009

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 European 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 4 months we are in the process of transformation of 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 funding 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 State 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, 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 collapse .

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 notification 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 in the next few days representatives of the European Commission will investigate the situation and to point out our suggestions for the improvement of the mental health care system in Greece.

Lobbying and Networking Activities of ARGOS Network

The lobbying and Networking activities of ARGOS Network are focused on:

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

Lobbying and Networking Activities of ARGOS Network in local level

Lobbying and Networking activities in local level includes cooperation with:

- Local Authorities (1st Level)
- Local social and health care services
- Scientific Associations
- Local media
- Associations of the Employees
- NGO's

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 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

Lobbying and Networking Activities of ARGOS Network in regional level

Lobbying and Networking activities in Regional Level includes the cooperation with:

- Labour Centers
- Local Authorities (2nd Level)
- NGO's
- Scientific Associations
- Universities
- Members of the parliament
- Media

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

Lobbying and Networking Activities of ARGOS Network in national level

Lobbying and Networking activities in National level includes cooperation with:

- All the political parties
- Members of the Greek Parliament
- NGO's
- Other Networks
- Universities
- Committees
- Associations of the Employees, the families and the patients
- General Confederation of Greek Labours (GSEE)
- Confederation of the Unions of Greek Public Servants (ADEDY)
- Media in National Level

Lobbing and Networking Activities of ARGOS Network in national level

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

- Organization of the National Conference for the Crisis in mental health
- Common actions with the Labour Associations in National Level
- Organization of demonstrations in common with the associations of the employees, the families and the patients
- Provision of the necessary documentation to the members of the parliament in order to proceed to official reports and/or questions to the Greek Parliament
- Provision of the necessary documentation to the media

Lobbing and Networking Activities of ARGOS Network in European level

Lobbing and Networking activities in European level includes cooperation with:

- European Political Parties
- Members of the European Parliament (Greeks and/or other member states)
- Executives of the European Commission
- NGO's in the field of Mental Health
- European Association of patients

Lobbying and Networking Activities of ARGOS Network in European level

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

- Provision of the necessary documentation to the members of the European parliament in order to proceed to official reports and/or questions to the European Parliament
- Provision of the necessary documentation to the E.C.
- Participation in events and meetings in European Level regarding the crisis of Mental Health in Greece (e.g. meeting of the European Socialist Party on the 29/1/2009)

MAIN DIFFICULTIES

- Limited interest for Mental Health especially under the framework of the current global financial and social crisis
- The general crisis of the health sector in Greece reflects to the mental health sector which is considered as of minor importance
- Prepossession against NGO's which are considered as a mean for the privatization of the health sector
- Diversification among the NGO's due to their different legal status

The effects of Lobbying and networking

- The development of informal networks even though it is taken place without specific methodology it is very supportive in the implementation of innovation and in the creation of the essential prerequisites of the development of its members.
- At the same time some structural characteristics that appears threatens the existence of the network, such as methodological difficulties regarding the evaluation process of the networking and some difficulties regarding the design and implementation of the essential strategic and development planning.
- The experimental formulation of a theory regarding the practice of the network creates the necessary conditions regarding the establishment of an effective dialogue among the partners involved in local level.

The most effective activities till now

- Networking with the official agencies for the protection of the human rights of the patients
- Reporting of the situation to the Greek Ombudsman
- Reporting of the situation to the European Social Fund
- Informing the Members of the European Parliament
- Organizing Demonstrations with the participation of users and families
- Press releases and special articles