



Erasmus+ Project

“European Standards for Peer Support Workers in Mental Health”

European standards for the work of peer supporter in-depth analysis



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Product I01 - Europe-wide uniform quality standards for the work of the peer worker on the basis of practical experience from the participating countries and taking into account the access requirements in the countries.

1. Recovery is a unique, personal process in which the client gives meaning and direction to his own life. The recovery process leads to a renewed sense of self and identity. *Qualifications* that should be specifically addressed in the curriculum for the peer workers are:

- a) The use of non-medical recovery supporting language
- b) A careful and open view in giving meaning
- c) Being able to listen without judgement
- d) Giving input based on equal value with respect for differences
- e) History and basic knowledge of classification and diagnostics in relation to psychiatric disorders

Points **a) b) c) and d)** are some of the essential qualifications required for the role of peer worker in Greece. As it will be mentioned below, there is still no professional competence profile in our country. However, in the debate surrounding this issue, which is now emerging as a crucial and timely issue, the existence of this role is closely linked to the activities of mental health organizations and users' organizations that are Recovery oriented.

2. Organization of the activities of the peer workers in the respective country

- a) Exists as a specified legal term (in which laws / law / legal regulations?)
- b) Is the term peer worker used by the authorities and other public institutions in a defined way (which?)?



c) Is the term "peer worker" defined by the professional associations and non-government organizations (which?)?

d) other options, please define

e) General remarks

2.a) There is no legal definition for peer work/ peer workers in the mental health field in Greece.

2.b) On its own initiative, KETHEA (Greek Therapy Center for Dependent Individuals) has established a Certification Board for Alcohol & Drug Counsellors and Prevention Specialists in collaboration with the **IC&RC** (that is addressed to mental health specialists and ex users as well). The Board examines applications and provides credentials for professionals living and working in Greece, Cyprus, Malta and Bulgaria in accordance with international standards and the particular cultural conditions that hold in each country.

The International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium, which was founded in 1981, is a non-profit consortium of boards that credential drug counsellors, clinical supervisors, prevention specialists, professionals who deal with co-existing disorders, and certified criminal justice addictions professionals.

Additionally, there are also breast cancer survivors' associations, such as „Alma Zois“ that use the term. Specifically, they are implementing „Reach to Recovery“ Program that is based on voluntary peer work (volunteers offer psychological support within the anti-cancer hospitals to women who have recently been mastectomized).

2.c) In many non-governmental organizations peer supporters work very close with other users as kind of mentors or trainers that support their adaptation in work environment (this is the case in Social Cooperatives of Limited Liability), or accompany them is social integration. In many cases they offer the support in a basis of solidarity and not as a paid job. In other cases this kind of mentoring is part of their paid position in the Social Cooperative of Limited Liability. This is also the case in the Social Cooperatives of Limited Liability of the Society of Social Psychiatry P.Sakellaropoulos. In addition, in the Vocational Training Programme of the above organization there is a model of peer job training where peers that have accomplished their own 3 years training programme are the job trainers and mentors



to the newly entered members.

We also have to refer to the term “self-help groups / self-support” that exist under the initiative of many non-governmental organizations, self-representation and self-advocacy groups.

2.d) There is a specific Program for the Promotion of Self-Help in ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI - School of Psychology, Funded by the MINISTRY OF HEALTH and implemented in cooperation with the GREEK ORGANIZATION AGAINST DRUGS (OKANA). Self-Help Promotion Programs of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki are the only state proposal in the country that places at the heart of its intervention methodology the idea of self-help to address and prevent addiction and other psychosocial disorders problems and health problems.

There is also an annual three-day nationwide seminar for the promotion of empowerment, self-help and peer-support that is carried out by users. It has been organized since 2017 by the users’ organization “Aftoekprosopisi” in collaboration with the Society of Social Psychiatry P.Sakellaropoulos.

3. Related occupations / activities / functions that are not referred to as "peer workers" but operate in the same area / address similar topics in the respective country

a) do they exist as a specified legal term (in which laws / sub-ordinate regulations / ordinances?)?

b) are these occupations / activities used by the authorities in a defined way (which ones?)?

c) Are these occupations / activities used by professional associations and non-government organizations (which?) in a defined way?

d) other options, please define

e) general remarks



Please see our answer in 2c above.

4. If a "peer worker" or related profession / function / activity exists, the person / s will usually be paid by:

- a) the patient / assisted person himself
- b) the health insurance
- c) government or public bodies (which ones?)
- d) Non-government organizations
- e) other options, please specify
- f) general remarks

4.d) In non-governmental organizations the peer supporter can be paid from the organization and the budget of the specific project or activity in the frame of which he/she offers the support.

In many cases they offer the support in a basis of solidarity and not as a paid job. In other cases this kind of mentoring is part of their paid position in the Social Cooperative of Limited Liability.

5. Status Quo: A peer worker or related professional in our country must meet the following formal standards in our country (if a combination of elements is required, please include them all, please indicate them as much as possible).

- a) Secondary education (class 9/10)



- b) Higher education (class 12/13)
- c) Non-academic vocational qualification without educational profile
- d) Non-academic professional qualification with educational profile
- e) Non-academic professional qualification with health profile
- f) Academic professional qualification without profile
- g) Academic professional qualification with educational profile
- h) Academic professional qualification with health profile
- i) Individual membership in a professional organization, company or chamber
- j) Obligatory further education in methodical / didactic questions
- k) Compulsory education in the health sector
- l) Compulsory education in general occupational and employment areas
- m) Obligatory technical supervision
- n) Mandatory ethical advice
- o) other options, please specify
- p) general remarks

There is no official training and official definition and requirements.



5.p) Please see our answer in 2b concerning KETHEA and its collaboration with IC&RC.

6. Vision for our project: A European peer worker or professional relative should meet the following formal standards (if a combination of elements is required, please include them all, indicating them as much as possible).

- a) Secondary education (class 9/10)
- b) Higher education (class 12/13)
- c) Non-academic vocational qualification without educational profile
- d) Non-academic professional qualification with educational profile
- e) Non-academic professional qualification with health profile
- f) Academic professional qualification without profile
- g) Academic professional qualification with educational profile
- h) Academic professional qualification with health profile
- i) Individual membership in a professional organization, company or chamber
- j) Obligatory further education in methodical / didactic questions
- k) Compulsory education in the health sector
- l) Compulsory education in general occupational and employment areas
- m) **Obligatory technical supervision**



n) **Mandatory ethical advice**

o) other options, please specify

p) general remarks

6.m) and n). A popular opinion is that we should care less about the academic requirements and more for ethical advice, personality and strengths, willingness to participate, supervision. A mental health peer worker is someone employed on the basis of their personal lived experience of mental illness and recovery.

7. Vision for our project: A "peer-worker" with European standards:

a) should have a generalist education to be a peer-worker with non-compulsory specialization

b) should receive "professional" training as a peer worker

c) should have specialized training as a peer worker in general and a compulsory initial qualification for specific groups with specific mental health problems

d) other options, please define

e) general remarks

Peer workers have to be trained and supervised carefully based on their own strengths and initiative and of course taking into account the perspectives and the specific needs of the users' group that they are going to serve.

8. The proposed curriculum for peer workers:

a) should be developed taking into account the ideas and views of the patients being cared for



b) In our country, there may be resistance from stakeholders questioning construct validity or the presence of needs

c) should receive informal support from stakeholders / patients

d) should be formally supported by stakeholders through public hearings and invited speakers at congresses

e) other options, please specify

f) General remarks

9. Other comments are welcome, please add them here.

- As mentioned above there is still no professional competence profile of PEER WORKER in our country.
- However, there is a growing interest for peer work in Greece nowadays. Stakeholders seem to increasingly recognize that a) peer work is evidence-based good practice strongly linked to recovery model b) in order to provide recovery oriented services, it is necessary to introduce and develop systematically a professional competence profile of “peer worker”.
- During this small survey on the situation in Greece, the questionnaires were distributed to different bodies (to users’ organizations, users who work in mental health services, members of the academic and scientific community, our National Federation of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Organizations, NGOs, Social Cooperatives of Limited Liability and others). We received back 17 completed questionnaires that we took into account in our evaluation.