

The booklet “Let’s work together” was developed within the EC funded “IMPULSE” study with the aim of facilitating service user involvement in mental health care and research in Southeast Europe. It describes the current state of user-led organisations in this region and presents the project’s experiences with involving service users and caregivers in mental health research. The booklet provides informative and comprehensive guidance for service users but also a wide variety of other stakeholders interested in learning about, promoting and developing service-user involvement, including a convenient glossary of the terms used and the definitions of relevant concepts. The survey of the existing user-led organisations in the region gives a very useful overview of their characteristics, current activities and challenges they face. Describing challenges from users’, professionals’, organisational and community perspectives, but also sharing recommendations for success, provides an insight into the difficulties encountered and strategies to overcome them. A few detailed examples of best practice vividly illustrate what successful functioning of the local user-led organisation looks like and are also a source of potential ideas on achieving sustainability. This booklet represents a useful reading for civil sector funders, professionals, and volunteers but also clinicians and policy makers interested in service user involvement as it can help them learn about the existing activities in the region, identify gaps, and make informed plans and strategies.

The booklet also addresses involving service users in mental health research which is a new concept in this region. The authors describe the practicalities of organising “Lived Experience Advisory Panels” within the IMPULSE study and give examples of how the panel members’ insights have been used to inform the research process. This is further illustrated by the members’ reflections on their experience. The overview is a good starting point for service users, academics and researchers from the region interested in developing such activities further.

Finally, there is a welcome emphasis in the booklet on networking, regional collaboration and learning from other’s experiences which is essential for building momentum for service user involvement. Although the findings are focused on the countries of Southeast Europe, the insights into challenges encountered and ways to overcome them are potentially applicable to other developing countries.

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