

Welcome to the third newsletter from the IMPULSE project! This newsletter provides a snapshot of key activities over the past 12 months. Please visit our website and social media accounts for more information and updates or email us at impulseprojectlondon@gmail.com.

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

IMPULSE (Implementation of an effective and cost-effective intervention for patients with psychotic disorders in low and middle-income countries in South Eastern Europe) is a 3.5-year project funded by the European Commission as part of the [Horizon 2020 initiative](#).

The objective of the study is to facilitate the development of psychosocial care and treatment for people with psychotic disorders in Southeast Europe. We have been working closely with service users, family members, clinicians, commissioners and policy makers to ensure our activities are focused and meaningful and that project outputs are sustainable.

The IMPULSE study is co-ordinated by Queen Mary University of London. Research activities are conducted by partners in six European countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia, and the United Kingdom. More information about the team can be found on our website (impulse.qmul.ac.uk)

The project started in April 2018. Recently the project has been extended for 6 months and the end-date is 30th September 2021. We have by now completed data collection for all studies within the project and currently the focus is on analysis, write up and dissemination.



IMPULSE TEAM during last face-to-face meeting in Montenegro in February 2020 (before the COV-19 pandemic was announced)

NEWS

- **WEBINAR** Our first ever webinar was held on 19th April 2021. The topic was service user and carer involvement in Southeast Europe. The webinar was attended by 150 people from 24 countries!



One attendee shared: *"You provided clear view on user lead organisation which is something I am hearing for the first time. I will try to implement this new approach for users in my country".*

What's on the webinar agenda?

- Different types of user involvement in mental health
- User involvement in mental health research
- Case studies of two user-led organisations in the Balkans
- Practical guide to developing and sustaining user involvement

Speakers include Professor Norman Sartorius (Switzerland), Ms Tihana Majstorović (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Ms Dženana Nikšić (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Ms Mina Aleksić (Serbia), and Dr Nikolina Jovanović (United Kingdom).

If you missed it, please find the recording on our YouTube channel. It includes inspirational lecture about fighting stigma in 21st century from legendary Professor Norman Sartorius:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MO4Lm9pYi3o>

NEWS

- **BOOKLET** We have recently published a booklet entitled 'Let's work together' which summarises our experiences with facilitating service user involvement in Southeast Europe. It includes examples related to user involvement in mental health research, case studies of two successful organisations Menssana (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Prostor (Serbia), and recommendations for establishing and running a user led organisation in settings with limited resources. The booklet has been published in Albanian, Bosnian, English, Macedonian, Montenegrin, and Serbian.



“ The booklet works on multiple levels, as an advocacy document, a tool box for those who want to establish their own user led organisation, and a resource for those who want to know more”

Dr Susan Collinson, Chair of Lived Advisory Group, UK

“Much can be learnt from the positive results with these initiatives in Southeast Europe, as well as from their challenges. There is useful information on how services can be redefined by working equally with Service Users, and that this involvement is in itself an empowering process.”

Adrian Curwen, Service User, East London NHS Foundation Trust, UK

Please find the booklet on our website:

<http://impulse.qmul.ac.uk/dissemination/lets-work-together-booklet/>

NEWS

- **DISSEMINATION EVENT** On 20th February, 2021 Bosnian organised a press conference in the beautiful International Gallery of Portrait Tuzla. They met with mental health service users, NGO 'Fenix' and professionals from Tuzla. Professor Alma Džubur Kulenović (principal investigator from Clinical Centre University of Sarajevo) and Dr Hana Sakira (research assistant on Impulse) presented the project and demonstrated the use of the DIALOG+ intervention. Other speakers included Mr Vahid Đulović, president of user organisation 'Feniks', Professor Esmina Avdibegović, head of professional committee of 'Feniks', and Bojan Šošić, chair of Impulse Scientific Advisory Board. Please find below photos and video coverage of the meeting: <https://fb.watch/5CEqc48aAY/>

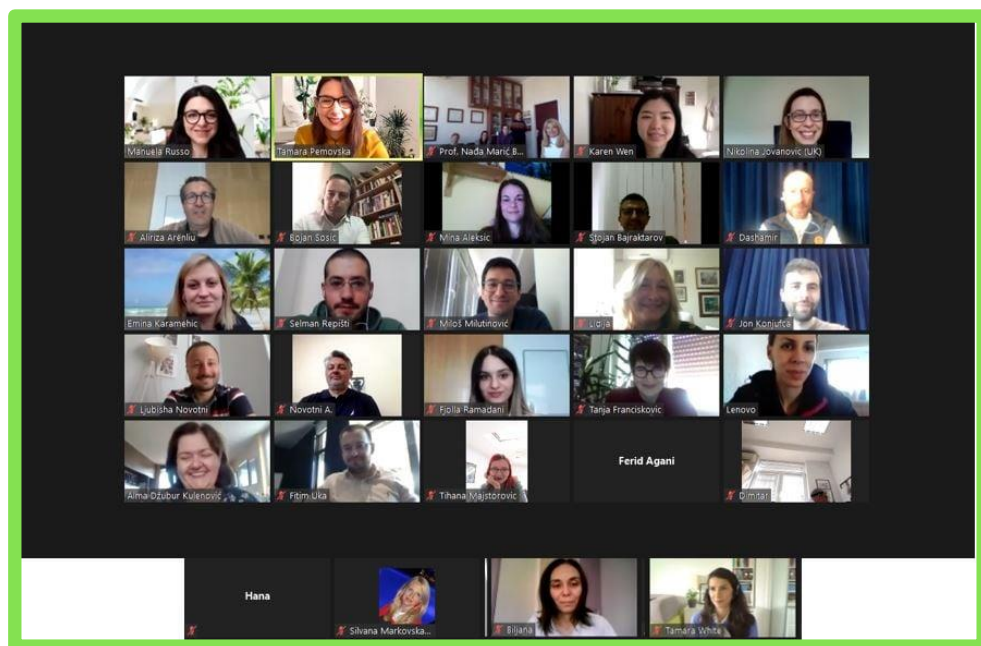


- **NEGATIVE SYMPTOMS** Findings from the IMPULSE study were presented at the prestigious Schizophrenia International Research Society congress held during 17-21 April, 2021. We are proud to have been represented by the brilliant Dr Manuela Russo from our Team who talked about a factor analytic study on negative symptoms in schizophrenia. [#SIRS2021](https://twitter.com/SIRS2021)



NEWS

- PROJECT MEETINGS** Our team had two virtual project meetings, in October 2020 and March 2021, respectively. We used these opportunities to present work from ongoing research activities, think together how to best interpret our findings and how to disseminate them to relevant audience. We tried to break the monotony of virtual meetings by having chat rooms and breaks filled with art. Professor Toni Novotni shared his favourite music with the team and Ms Mina Aleksić showed us beautiful images of making art from nature.

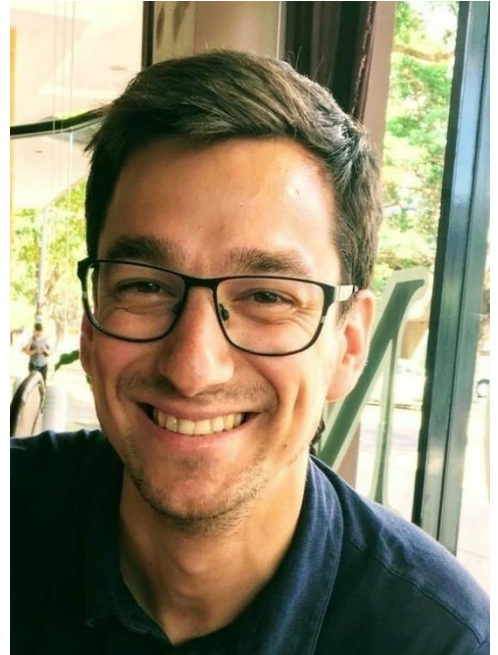


IMPULSE TEAM
during our 6th
project meeting
held on Zoom in
March 2021.

- NEW STAFF** Three people have recently joined the QMUL team, Dr Tamara White, Ms Teodora Popnikolova, and Ms Karen Wen. Their work will focus on dissemination and public engagement. Dr Hana Sikira joined the Bosnian team after Dr Eldina Smajić Mešević left the project to start her psychiatric training. Good luck to everyone!

MEET OUR RESEARCHERS: INTERVIEW WITH DR MILOŠ MILUTINOVIĆ

Dr. Miloš Milutinović has recently completed his psychiatric training and is now a psychiatrist working at the University Clinic of Psychiatry in Skopje, North Macedonia. Miloš has also been involved in several research projects. He is also a family man and proud father of a 4-year-old daughter. Where does he find time for all this? We asked him five super difficult questions about life, research and...



Miloš, what got you interested in the IMPULSE study?

I would rather say Who got you interested rather than What, since my superiors, Prof Novotni and Prof Bajraktarov, were the ones who introduced me with the IMPULSE study. After that it was easy to find my place in our Macedonian team and in the whole IMPULSE family, as well. The biggest take for me of being involved in the study is the part when you meet likeminded people a.k.a. mental health professionals from the region and beyond, ultimately becoming richer not only in colleagues for life, but friends.

What do you like about mental health research?

It is the research process itself. Discovering the literature on some topic of interest. Then, to “digest” that “ocean” of information, connect the dots and try to add something new to the existing evidence. Last thing that got me going was how to implement evidence based practices and how to make it accessible for our patients in need.

MEET OUR RESEARCHERS: INTERVIEW WITH DR MILOŠ MILUTINOVIĆ

What is your experience with publishing papers in peer-reviewed journals?

Almost none 😊. That would be the short answer to this question. The longer one is that I had the chance to be involved in few scientific papers as a coauthor. The submission of the paper is the easiest thing if you have done the previous tasks correctly. The hardest thing is to wait for an answer from a scientific journal whether they accept the paper or not. For one paper we have submitted, my teammates and I trained our patience for more than a year, waiting for the journal's answer. However, more often, it is faster than this, no need to worry, I don't want to discourage young researchers.

What piece of advice would you give to your younger self?

Depends on how younger is my younger self :) I would definitely advise Miloš not to postpone things until the deadline. He will do it correctly and timely enough, no doubts about it. Why work intensely on a task for days, not having a proper sleep, when you have the time to disperse that same work on a longer time frame. Therefore, when the deadline is there, rather than rushing sleeplessly, he will enjoy a glass of wine while watching some relaxing comedy show with his lovelier other half and go to bed feeling less stressed. Bottom line is not to postpone things, whether it is for work, family, leisure activities or something else.

What you enjoy doing when you aren't working?

Lately, I must admit I am struggling to find that leisure time for me. At least not in the same quantity as I had it, let's say 3 years ago. However, it is spending quality time with my family and friends, building LEGO castles with my daughter and teaching her how to ride a bicycle. One of the most enjoyable activities for me is playing tennis on a perfect sunny day. I had that two days ago, so I can't complain honestly. Also not to forget, mowing the lawn is a perfect way to actively rest and relax.

NEW PUBLICATIONS:

- Repišti S, Jovanović N, Rojnić Kuzman M, Medved S, Jerotić S, Ribić E et al. **How to measure the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on quality of life: COV19-QoL –the development, reliability and validity of a new scale.** *GLOBAL PSYCHIATRY*, 3, 2, 2020, 201-210. doi: 10.2478/gp-2020-0016
- Šetić R, Majstorović T, Aleksić M, Zebić M. **Model to Successfully Engage Mental Health Service Users and Family in Recovery Process – Preliminary Results of the Impulse Study.** *Sarajevski dani psihologije zbornik radova* (published in Bosnian). 2020; 6:277-293.
- Hunter J, McCabe R, Francis JJ, Pemovska T, Ribić E, Smajić Mesević E, et al. **Implementing a mental health intervention in low-and-middle-income countries in Europe: is it all about resources?.** *GLOBAL PSYCHIATRY*, 4, 1, 2021, 31-54. doi: 10.52095/gp.2020.1409
- Pemovska T, Jovanović N, Radojičić T, Arënliu A, Džubur-Kulenović A, Novotni A, et al. **Protocol for a process evaluation of a cluster randomised controlled trial to improve psychosocial treatment of patients with psychotic spectrum disorders: the IMPULSE trial.** *GLOBAL PSYCHIATRY*, 4, 1, 2021, 20-30. doi: 10.52095/gp.2020.1407
- Ristić I, Jerotić S, Zebić M, Savić B, Vuković V, Russo M, Voskresenski T, Jovanović N, Marić NP. **Factorial Structure of the Serbian Version of the Clinical Assessment Interview for Negative Symptoms–Evidence for Three Factors of Negative Symptoms.** *Frontiers in psychology*. 2020 Oct 26;11:2852.
- Savić B, Jerotić S, Ristić I, Zebić M, Jovanović N, Russo M, Marić NP. **Long-Term Benzodiazepine Prescription During Maintenance Therapy of Individuals With Psychosis Spectrum Disorders-Associations With Cognition and Global Functioning.** *Clin Neuropharmacol*. 2021 May-Jun 01;44(3):89-93. doi: 10.1097/WNF.0000000000000442. PMID: 33560008.

All papers have been published in open access journals.
Please check our website for all papers from the project:
<http://impulse.qmul.ac.uk/dissemination/>

UPCOMING EVENTS

15-16 JUNE 2021 | 7th IMPULSE PROJECT MEETING

SEPTEMBER 2021 | IMPULSE WEBINAR 'HOW TO IMPROVE PSYCHOSOCIAL TREATMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH PSYCHOSIS' (DATE AND SPEAKERS TO BE CONFIRMED)

23 - 25 SEPTEMBER 2021 | 8TH EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON SCHIZOPHRENIA RESEARCH (ECSR) VIRTUAL CONFERENCE. LOOK FOR TWO SYMPOSIA FROM OUR TEAM ON TOPICS SUCH AS NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN TREATMENT FOR PSYCHOSIS AND SERVICE USER INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE.

18 – 21 OCTOBER 2021 | 21st WPA WORLD CONGRESS OF PSYCHIATRY. LOOK FOR OUR SYMPOSIUM ON CHALLENGES FOR MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

More dissemination workshops are in preparation, details will be shared on our social media channels!

We love talking about our work!

Engage with us via [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), or our [website](#).

The IMPULSE team