

## **First repository of written sources on the protection of mental health in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

If we do not recognise the enormous efforts that have been made over various periods of time, in measuring, innovating, improving and reforming mental health services, we condemn all those that try to systematically study and promote mental health in Bosnia and Herzegovina to pile up various sources through personal connections, but also – and that is far worse – to act as though nothing has ever been done in this field before that very moment.

Bosnia and Herzegovina had been a country in which people suffering from mental illnesses were humanely treated within the walls of the Sinan's tekke – a Sufi temple in 17<sup>th</sup> century Sarajevo, a country where experts such as Dr. Nedo Zec developed psychiatry, a country that could directly benefit from the activities of one Dr. Andrija Štampar, the first president of World Health Organization and author of the definition of health we so often quote when we speak about the importance of mental health. Bosnia and Herzegovina is also a country where epidemiology was developed by a Harvard student Dr. Grujica Žarković, and a country in which pioneering efforts in rehabilitation of psychiatric patients were made by a teacher Nebojša Krekić who achieved world-class results in the field as manager of the 'Jakeš' Institute. And yet, we seem to forget all that too easily.

Association Fenix would not be able to justify the meaning of its own name if we weren't ready to accept the fact that the humane approach in the protection of mental health in Bosnia and Herzegovina did not start with us. We learn from the past in order to be able to know where we are heading in the future; although it happens all too often that activists in the mental health protection system stick to the illusion that the world seems to somehow start with them. By recognising this situation, Association Fenix has in early 2015 made a decision to invest own resources – since there have never been investments of this sort – in compiling the first constant repository of written sources on the protection of mental health in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It has been conceived to outlive any temporarily financed project by any of the currently active institutional stakeholders in the field.

This collection of materials is conceived as a virtual system for storing and referring papers (articles), theses, and other texts to interested researchers and decision-makers in the field of mental health protection. In this stage we are still collecting and scanning crucial sources. A list of archived materials will be provided soon, and the users of the repository will be provided with ways to legally obtain access to parts of the collection. We believe this will especially be of help to academics and students in the fields of psychiatry, psychology, social work, and nursing. We hereby invite all the researchers in these fields to offer us a helping hand in this endeavour and enable us access to relevant articles, bachelor's master's or doctoral theses, and to personal bibliographies through which we might orient in further tracking of various sources.

The criterion to include a piece of material in the repository is a thematic connection of the text to the field of mental health protection of the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The topics may, for instance, relate to:

- the history of treating the mentally ill in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, or topics of significance for understanding general trends in mental health protection in Bosnia and Herzegovina (the wider context of healthcare and social protection, perspectives, policies and

practice relevant for the field of mental health), including the biographies of prominent contributors;

- empirical epidemiological studies depicting various indicators of mental health or quality of life of mental health service users, or the general risks of developing problems in the domain of mental health faced by the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina (regardless of age or similar characteristics);
- means, problems, and challenges in organising services for the protection and promotion of mental health or in skill-acquisition by representatives of various professions (e.g. trends in educating psychotherapists, facing the problems of professional burnout) or developing relevant professional societies in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- informative leaflets and brochures, as well as manuals and guidebooks for mental health service users and members of their families;
- relevant laws and regulations, and official reports of relevant institutions;
- translations of relevant international documents (conventions, declarations).

We are especially interested in obtaining texts published by foreign researchers (most often in relation to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina), since a systematic way of tracking such publications never existed so far. There have been countless foreign doctorants who gathered their sources by asking individuals for help, and very often it happened nobody in Bosnia and Herzegovina ever saw such theses once they were finished.

We will not be able to ensure access to all of the materials in the repository to the interested parties, especially if these materials are commercially available papers in journals or otherwise protected sources, but we will try to enable the users of the repository to gain insight through providing short abstracts or tables of contents.