

Catalysing mental health reform

EPW core priorities and flagships

Moving towards universal health coverage
Promoting health and well-being
The Mental Health Coalition 🇭🇷

WHO collaboration

Mobilizing expertise
Partnership between the Regional
Office and Country Office

In recent years, Croatia has begun transitioning its mental health-care system to a more community-centred approach. Before 2016, mental health services in the country were largely confined to psychiatric hospitals with limited integration into broader health services. Recognizing the need for change, Croatia developed a community-based mental health strategy, a journey supported by the Regional Office.

The Regional Office's collaboration with Croatia has been pivotal, particularly through the QualityRights initiative, which promotes the rights of people with psychosocial, intellectual and cognitive disabilities. The initiative has now been implemented in regions such as Zagreb and Split. The Regional Office has also trained health-care workers to emphasize human rights in psychiatric settings. The current EU-funded project provides an opportunity to advance this work. A mission to Croatia is planned for late 2024 to design a QualityRights work plan.

The impact

The QualityRights course has not only improved the quality of care, but also empowered individuals with lived experiences of mental health issues to actively participate in their recovery and contribute to the care of others facing mental health challenges. These peer workers are now integral members of mobile mental health teams, offering support and hope to others undergoing treatment.

Lessons learned

- Human rights-based approaches significantly enhance the quality of mental health care.
- Involving individuals with lived experience in care delivery fosters a more empathetic and effective support system.
- Continuous training is required for the evolution of Croatia's mental health support system.

Donors and partners

Institute of Public Health; Ministry of Health; EU



European Region



The Regional Office is supporting Croatia with its mental health reform.
© UNICEF Croatia

“The QualityRights initiative is improving care in Croatia, empowering those living with mental health challenges to support others in need.”

Professor Danijela Štimac Grbić, Head of the Mental Health Department, Institute of Public Health, Croatia

What's next?

Croatia is expanding the number of community-based mental health centres and mobile teams. A new postgraduate degree in community mental health will train professionals in supporting marginalized groups, and telemedicine is being developed for remote areas. Priorities for WHO support include strengthening primary health-care (PHC) practitioners' capacity in early detection, management and referral.