



### UPDATE ON THE PROJECT STATUS

The project "HelpEx" is in the middle of the testing phase (pilot measures) of the developed modules – in the different partner organizations and transnationally.

In the first transnational online training in November 2020, peers and professionals could get to know each other in a European context. Approximately 50 people exchanged views about the importance of peer counseling and about personal crisis experiences. The training took place online due to the world-wide pandemic. Since then, the participants met again online every month for one hour in transnational mini-digital training sessions.

#### Statements made in the trainings:

*"Peers are the bridge between clients and professionals".*

*"By sharing different perspectives, the social psychiatric service has a better chance to work effectively".*

*"You become aware of your own strengths and resources,"*

*"You gain greater sensitivity to others through the crisis experience".*

In the transnational context the technical requirements and communicating in English are challenging for many participants. However, the common topic, shared interest and openness connects the participants across the partner countries and despite the physical distance.

### PEER WORK AT RKA (DE)

No one is resistant to mental crises. In recent years, more and more students are falling ill. Teachers often find out late that students are overwhelmed and have to discontinue their studies. Due to this development, it is crucial to implement the idea of the peer approach in educational settings, because the exchange with like-minded people relieves.

At RKA peers and teachers have been trained based on the HelpEX modules and have practically tested counseling situations in roleplays over the last 12 months.

The initial uncertainty: "What do I do if a student comes to me with an addiction or depression problem?" gave way to the realization that listening is often the first important step and that it may be useful to refer the student to the appropriate authorities. In addition, the peers are accompanied and advised by teachers.

ONLINE MEETING PEERS AND STAFF FROM RKA, JUNE 2021



### „FLASHLIGHT“ ON IOS

The results of the pilot measures (in the partner organizations and in transnational online sessions) will determine the final cut of the training manual for professionals and peers (IOs). For example, in the one-hour online sessions the partners experiment with topics like the system perspective on organizations and how peer counseling changes institutional structures; the historical background of peer approaches as well as the necessity of a job advertisement for peers.

The partners have established consulting committees (CC) in their regions to critically monitor the project and compare it with current developments. The CCs also contribute to the country-specific analysis of structures and recommendations for the inclusion of peers in the health care system (IO3) by answering and evaluating a questionnaire. The answers show the added value of peer counseling on the one hand but also possible areas of tension between professionals and peers underlying their roles.