

Deinstitutionalizing Mental Health in Albania, Shortcoming of a National Reform

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Abstract:

Our goal was to examine the right to quality mental health services in Albania from a comparative approach integrating the analysis of inherited clinical concept of psychiatric treatment with the “innovative” model of community based services, introduced after law amendments in 2012.

The Albanian health care system of the '90s showed many challenges in splitting the clinical psychiatry into mental health and psychiatry (seen separately as a medical specialty). This was reflected in the difficulties of amending the 1996 law on mental health, and the urgency of the integration of concepts of human rights and fundamental freedoms for the treatment of people with mental illnesses. The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006) provided momentum to highlight the importance of the nexus between disabilities, mental health and deinstitutionalization.

Furthermore, the new context of the 2012 legislation, followed by secondary acts, action plans and strategies conceptualized a model of community care support which still needs time to be “digested” by the inherited excessively hospital-based system, which turned every person with problems into a prisoner, abide by prison-like rules, living in worse-than-prison conditions, having committed no crime.

Without immediate and continuous therapy and rehabilitation, limited [or no] freedom to exercise socio-politico-economic rights, forced routines and lack of privacy depriving people of their dignity, many live in such poor conditions that could cause them irreparably physical or mental harm, or even inhuman and degrading treatment.

Keywords

Mental Health Reform, Deinstitutionalization, Human Rights, Hospital-based System