



Newsletter June 2020

The first EuroTC-Webinar of 22 May was a great success. Approximately fifty participants from nine countries participated. They heard statements about the question

„What changes for the TC and Residential Treatment during the Time of Covid-19 Pandemic“

and discussed the needs of

„Safety, Stability and Financing in Residential Treatment for Persons with Substance Abuse – a European Perspective“.

All speakers described how they have faced the pandemic of Covid-19, in particular the quarantine measures, the testing, as far as tests were available, some pointed out the lack of public transport, and all stated none or few cases in their TC. The first part of the webinar, moderated by *EuroTC-president Thomas Legl*, started with a welcome greetings from **Alexis Goosdeel**, *director of the EMCDDA*. He highlighted his strong support for the TCs and emphasised the close partnership with EuroTC.

The director of EMCDDA mentioned three key lessons of the Covid-Pandemic. The first challenge was, that all professionals had to improvise to maintain the support for the clients. The continuity of care must be regarded as essential and this goes together with the need to have protective equipment. The second challenge, Alexis Goosdeel named, was the need for innovation and flexibility regarding the way the treatment was organized and the use of digital communication. As third key lesson Alexis Goosdeel referred to the importance of the harm reduction services, which in part offered support to the community. They are not least important to reduce contamination with Sars CoV2.

Paolo Stocco, *Comunità di Venezia*, honorary president of EuroTC, in his opening words stressed that all professionals had been working without any guidelines, and had to re-invent the way to live in the therapeutic communities facing a double paradox: the professionals were faced in the paradox of provide recommendations about distancing and on the same time working hard to keep the persons together, taking into account that the fundamentals rules of the therapeutic community is that any client doesn't remain isolated and living in group. The most important challenges were the criterias for new admissions, the budget problems and the question how to face the psychological consequences for the clients and for the staff.

Dirk Kratz, *Ludwigsühle*, Germany, reported that now a situation of relaxation had occurred. Visits and exits are possible again, as there have been no more infections in the area since last week. Previously, various digital communication tools were tested and the video chat worked so well that it should be used permanently. For contacts between clients and professionals they use the messenger „wire“ due to its security. In the outpatient centre groups with four or five clients took place. Besides there was online treatment and counseling by video chat.

Phaedon Kaloterakis, *president of EFTC, Kette, Greece*, highlighted four conclusions:

- we have to be advocates for the people who use drugs
- the TCs are integral part of any national health system
- harm reduction and TCs provide significant psychosocial support - unemployment is a rising problem for the social reintegration
- we need more efficient networking across the lines

Oriol Esculies, *Projecto Hombre, Spain*, explained the problems caused by the uncertainty. He said, we have not enough answers for the residents. There is a continuing changing with many open questions and there aren't clear answers. Also the psychological and social consequences of the situation for the future remain unclear and uncertain. It is necessary to help the residents to handle with fears. A further demand is the empowering of the residents for jobs. For PH occupational activities have got a priority because of their importance for recovering.

Fernando Mendes, *EuroTC member of board, IREFREA Portugal*, stressed the need to be creative and flexible looking for finding new Idea to support the people in an effective and safe way . He advocated speaking with one voice at European level promoting our work.

The second round table, moderated by **Fernando Mendes**, *CTAI/DICAD/ARS Centro*, started with a statement of **Thomas Klein**, *Professional Association Addiction, Germany*. He described the restrictions for the admission of patients, initiated by the Health and the Pension Insurance, which are suspended meanwhile and the difficulties to assure the functioning of the therapeutic community and the right of patients.

Ela Megla, *Zajednica Susret, Croatia*, described the consequences of the lock down in her country, the sharp increase of fear, the cessation of social welfare services and so on. Contradictory guidelines were changing day by day. The TC's aim was to provide a protective environment for the clients and, considering the long waiting list, a rapid admission, before they will change their minds.

David Liddell, *Scottish Drugs Forum, United Kingdom*, outlined, that the response of the outpatient addiction services in Scotland was quite different, Some closed, others developed protective services including lowering threshold treatment. Due to the lower threshold new people were entering the methadone treatment. Injection equipment and Naloxon were provided.

Jaime Santos, *Comunidade Vida e Paz, Portugal*, reported, that the conditions in his TC were easier because it is only a small group and the location is situated near the beach. Nevertheless it was a difficult situation because of the worries about the future and the families outside.

The two round tables were followed by contributions to the discussion, which for space reasons are not shown here

Statement by EuroTC:

The therapeutic communities (rehabilitation facilities for persons with substances abuse) in Europe remained safe during the crisis of the pandemic Cobid-19 nevertheless there are strong consequences for the continuity of care treatment of their clients and the cohesion of the families.

Despite all the difficulties in the time of the pandemic, the therapy facilities have continued to work with the clients and took responsibly all the necessaries measures (safety, hygiene, health of the employees and the client) to keep safe the clients and workers..

This was also possible through the use of modern media, which were temporarily not possible due to the restrictions on new admissions and certain supplies (protective clothing) were bottlenecked due to regional conditions. With the greatest possible effort, the therapy facilities have gradually come back to the old acquaintance and qualified level. Many of the institutions have also received support from regional governments, according to the online conference on May 22, 2020.