



COALITION FOR WORK WITH PSYCHOTRAUMA AND PEACE KOALICIJA ZA RAD SA PSIHOTRAUMOM I MIR

THIS REPORT ALSO IS AVAILABLE ON [HTTPS://WWW.CWWPP.ORG/MONTHLY-REPORTS.HTML](https://www.cwwpp.org/monthly-reports.html).

INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The year began with the presidential election, which was won by former prime minister Zoran Milanović, who is more moderate than his opponent, the current president, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović. We wonder what will happen during parliamentary elections later in the year.

On 1 January, Croatia assumed the leadership of the European Union for the first six months of 2020. Again, we wonder how this will function considering Croatia's recent history of war and also the country's current record of violent repression of migrants.

On the International Day of Remembrance of Holocaust Victims, we heard that Zagreb would receive their first fifteen "stolpersteins", that is monuments to victims of World War II killed by the Nazis. These first were to Jews; monuments to Serbs, Roma, homosexuals, priests, and those who opposed the NDH (the puppet Nazi World War II Croatian state) regime will follow.

The migrant crisis continued, particularly on the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the police employing ever harsher measures to control the borders.

Generally speaking, there has been very little change in the psychological state in the region.

Externally, we had no new clients this month. Our continuing clients had the same issues as usual, that is, abuse as children combined with trans-generational transmission of trauma, compounded by the war.

We continued supervision with one person in Split and another in South Africa.

We continued to work with Snehalaya, the group in India with people working with the children of sex workers. We are continuing to make contacts with groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo and expect to start several groups there in February. Also, we expect to start a group with the social enterprise, Peace By Chocolate, which works refugees from the Middle East in Nova Scotia, Canada and elsewhere.

Further, we had contact with a suicide prevention group called Life Line in Zagreb, and expect to start work with them soon.

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We did not do much direct work with migrants this month. This is a paradox, as the situation continues to deteriorate, especially with the cold winter weather. We are continually hearing of psychological difficulties with migrants, here and elsewhere. It seems that the number of suicides and incidents of self-harm and other severe psychological incidents is increasing.

We would like to increase the number of groups in various parts of the world.

We revised the videos for the first Pragmatic Empowerment Training (PET) course, that is, the one on the caregiver-client relationship and self-care and put them on the website – they are downloadable there, on YouTube, and on Vimeo. We are working on the manual for the second course, that is, the one on communication.

This month, we commemorated the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Unfortunately, the vow that this never would happen again has not been realized.

Further, we are in the process of revising our website.

We finished the annual report for 2019 very early. The public version is on the website and other versions have been sent to donors.

During the coming months, we will continue to prioritize the migrant situation and translating the PET program into self-paced online courses. We also will write a report about the lessons learned in the 25 years of our existence. We also will attempt to expand the number of live PET groups in various parts of the world.

STATE OF THE REGION

The year began with the presidential election. "Let's be united in (our) differences. Four million of us ... are looking for our place in Europe, which is, despite all the problems, the nicest place to live, the most peaceful project in which Croatia must find its place and interest", former PM Zoran Milanović told his supporters, after denying a second term to the right-wing candidate Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović.

Civil society organizations opened the Croatian presidency of the Council of the EU with an expert advocacy panel "EU as a Forgotten Peace Project?" on 14th-15th January in Vukovar. The goal of the event, on the anniversary of peaceful reintegration of the Croatian Danube region and Croatia's international recognition, was to discuss the role of peacebuilding in the EU's foreign policy and ways in which Croatia, as the only member state with a recent experience of military conflict, can make its contribution in this area.

On the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of Holocaust Victims, we heard that Zagreb would finally receive their first fifteen "stolpersteins". These small individual monuments will be placed in front of the former homes of Jews in the center of Zagreb. Over time, similar tiles with their names, will be placed in front of the homes of Serbs and Roma, as well as in front of the homes of Croats who opposed the NDH (the World War II Nazi puppet Independent State of Croatia), and those of homosexuals and priests.

The migrant crisis continued, particularly on the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the police employing ever harsher measures to control the borders.

Generally speaking, there has been very little change in the psychological state in the region. The importance of mental health and wellbeing is still undervalued and stigmatized.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Clients

We had no new clients this month. Those that we had had the same issues as usual, that is, abuse as children combined with trans-generational transmission of trauma, compounded by the war.

Groups

The most successful group this month has been that with Snehalaya, the group in India with people working with the children of sex workers. We are assisting them with difficult situations, educating them, and supporting their efforts. We think that this is going reasonably.

We have been continuing to attempt to set up several groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo. There have been logistical difficulties with regard to time and the quality of the Internet connection. We made appointments for the first sessions of two groups that will start in early February.

Further, we have had contact with a suicide prevention group in Zagreb called Životna Linija (Life Line), which wants an educational and supervision group. We expect that to start in February.

Supervision

We continued supervision with one person in Split and another in South Africa. Both supervisions were at a relatively low level this month.

The Migrant Situation

We did not do much direct work with migrants this month. In some sense, this is a paradox, as the situation continues to deteriorate, especially with the cold winter weather. We are continually hearing of psychological difficulties with migrants, here and elsewhere. It seems that the number of suicides and incidents of self-harm and other severe psychological incidents is increasing. For us this is hardly surprising, considering the circumstances under which people are living and the levels of traumatization that they have undergone.

One positive note is that we have heard that, in February, we will begin a group with NaTakallam, which is a part of Peace by Chocolate. This is a social enterprise in Nova Scotia, Canada that employs refugees, who also teach Arabic.

Were we to have more funding, we would set up support centers in a number of regions, including Šid and other locations in Serbia, the Velika Kladuša/Bihać and Tuzla areas of Bosnia, and Greece.

Pragmatic Empowerment Training (PET)

We have revised the videos for the first course in the series, that is, the caregiver-client relationship and self-care. The new videos are on the website, on YouTube, and on Vimeo.

We also are in the process of completing the manual for the second course in the series, namely the course on communication. In the coming months, we also will make videos for that course.

Miscellaneous

The Global Psychosocial Network (GPN)

Charles Tauber attended the group, which this month again discussed accompaniment. We have agreed that there will be a meeting on the migrant situation in March.

Commemorations

This month, we commemorated the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

We also wrote a piece for Facebook on the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Unfortunately, massacres and ethnic cleansing continue in the world. Unfortunately, the promise of “never again” is nowhere near being fulfilled.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Reporting

We finished the annual report for 2019 very early. The public version is on the website and other versions have been sent to donors.

The Website

We are in the process of revising the website. Our aims are to make it more attractive, more navigable, and to revise old material. We also will translate parts of it into Croatian.

PROSPECTS FOR THE COMING MONTHS

Aside from our fieldwork, we have a great deal of writing to do in the coming months. We would like to continue with the PET course on communication and start on the course on basic psychology and counseling. We also would like to write a “lessons learned” document on our 25 years of existence.

We look forward to a challenging year.