

## **EULAR Knowledge Transfer Programme report**

### **Croatia - Germany**

**10 -12 June 2018, Bruchsaal, Rheuma Liga Baden Württemberg (RLBW)**

In the period from 10 to 12 of June 2018, three members from the Croatian League Against Rheumatism (CLAR) participated in the Knowledge transfer programme (KTP) visit in Germany. The host organization was Rheuma-Liga Baden-Württemberg e. V. in Bruchsal, Germany.

#### **The members of Rheuma-Liga Baden-Württemberg participating in KTP:**

<https://www.rheuma-liga-bw.de/index.php?id=1>

- Mr. Siegfried Hofmann, director of Rheuma-Liga Baden-Württemberg
- Mrs. Silke Ssymank, deputy director of Rheuma-Liga Baden-Württemberg
- Mrs. Stefanie Haim, patient volunteer, involved in working with other patients included in „patient-partner“ program and in “self-management” program.
- Mr. Julius Wiegand, patient volunteer included in “Patient - Partner program“ at the University of Heidelberg
- Mrs. Chasnitz, volunteer in the group TG Gruppe Hambrücken
- The therapist involved in the group TG Gruppe Hambrücken

#### **The members of Croatian League Against Rheumatism participating in KTP:**

<http://reuma.hr/>

- Mr. Tibor Litvaj, president of Croatian League Against Rheumatism (CLAR)
- Mrs. Vlasta S. Cerkenik, member of governing board in Croatian League Against Rheumatism
- Mrs. Mateja Znika, Vice president of Croatian League Against Rheumatism (CLAR)

## **TOPICS:**

### **1) History and development of RLBW**

During our visit, we gathered a lot of information regarding the Rheuma-Liga Baden-Württemberg's beginnings from Mr. Siegfried Hofmann the director of RLBW. Mr Hofmann and Mrs. Silke Ssymank, deputy director of Rheuma-Liga Baden-Württemberg. Mr. Hofmann talked about his personal experiences regarding the RLBW very humble beginnings, and of his involvement in RLBW from the start of the organization. At the very beginning, he was the only employee. At the start he focused his work in RLBW on fundraising, lobbying for Liga's interests at local politicians and establishing the legislative framework.

We learned that since the very beginning RLBW did not accept pharmaceutical companies as partners, but rather focused on funding through numerous health insurance companies that encourage patients to be proactive through physical and other sorts of activities that focus on health improvement.

The RLBW grew from only one employee in 1980's to eleven permanent employees today.

### **2) The support that RLBW has to offer to its members and cooperation between RLBW employees and RLBW volunteers**

RLBW today has 11 full time employees, 3000 volunteers and 70 360 members, plus a large number of part time therapists who provide professional support through "function training" groups. It has 80 branches and each branch has more than one support group that provides support in different areas, such as:

- Function training groups - the exercise groups for patients with rheumatic diseases. The function training can take place in any exercise hall (school, kindergarten...) or in the swimming pool and it is under the professional supervision of educated therapists. RLBW has in total 3000 function training groups.
- Psychosocial support groups – the groups beside the psychosocial support offer advisory centers for its members. RLBW has 300 groups in total. The groups are under the supervision of either employees/social workers or educated patients volunteers/trainers.
- Patient - Partner program – Mr. Julius Wiegand, and Mrs. Stefanie Haim, educated patients with rheumatic diseases presented to us "The Patient - Partner program"

- Self-management program –Mr. Julius Wiegand, and Mrs. Stefanie Haim, educated patients with rheumatic disease presented to us “The Self-management program”.

Some of the most characteristic RLBW features were that organization has developed organizational structures based on local branches, function training groups and psychosocial support groups that provide support to the RLBW members in their own homes.

Furthermore, the RLBW bases its services on the contracts made with health insurance companies.

The services provided by RLBW are based on biopsychosocial approach to the patients. They encourage the patient’s proactivity, particularly through “self-management program”. This is one of the reasons why RLBW does not except funding from the pharmaceutical industry.

### **3) Visit to the local “Function training group” class TG Gruppe Hambrücken (Frau Csanitz)**

We had an opportunity to attend to the class of function training, and to talk to therapist and to the patients about their experiences regarding the function training and RLBW. The way for member of RLBW to get to the function training is through physician’s referral. The referral can be for the period of couple of months until two years with the possibility of renewal. Educated therapists conduct the function training and supervise the regularity of patient attendance at the classes. The health insurance company of each patient covers the costs for the function training based on the patient’s attendance sheet.

#### **REPORT WRITTEN BY**

Mateja Znika, member of the Management Board – CLAR, Senior Lecturer, Department of Health Studies, College of Applied Sciences "Lavoslav Ruzicka" in Vukovar, PHD candidate in Social Gerontology, member/activist of the CLAR, actively participating in CLAR by giving lectures and being a coauthor of three educative booklets for patients.

#### **FOLLOW-UP**

- On October 29, 2018, the 4th Management Board Meeting authorized this Content Report.
- In December 2018, a Task Force was established to develop a Self-management program.