

Knowledge Transfer Programme Poland-Finland (report)

Title of KTP: Exchange knowledge related to engagement of volunteers in activities of organization

Teaching organization: The Finnish Rheumatism Association (Reumaliitto)

Learning organization: Polish Rheuma Federation "REF" (Ogólnopolska Federacja Stowarzyszeń Reumatyków "REF")

The preparations for the Knowledge Transfer Programme started with arranging the program schedule – it was decided that the Finnish delegation would visit Warsaw and meet the representatives of Polish rheumatic associations in April 2018, and given the situation in Poland the return visit to Helsinki would take place in August 2018.

The Preparation of the Finnish visit began with the collection of questions from REF member associations. The answers of their Finnish partners were sent back before the Warsaw visit and, after being translated into Polish, forwarded to the associations. This way, the representatives of associations that participated in the Warsaw meeting were able to learn about the Finnish healthcare system, the activities of the associations, their solutions to the problems, etc. before the planned event.

The Finnish visit to Warsaw took place between the 22nd and 25th April 2018 at the National Institute of Geriatrics, Rheumatology and Rehabilitation, where the REF Federation has its headquarters. The participants consisted of three Finnish delegates and twelve delegates from Polish associations – members of the REF Federation. During the visit, Polish representatives made presentations about the healthcare system in Poland, the epidemiology of rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases, as well as the activities of the REF and its member associations on international, national and regional level, underlining their strengths and weaknesses. The Finnish delegates presented the activities of their organization, a practical planning and funding system and data on volunteer work – both within their organization, and results of worldwide survey on volunteerism, which included quotes about respondents' attitude towards volunteering. All presentations were given in two languages – English and Polish, with slides translated beforehand and the presentations themselves – live by an interpreter.

During their stay in Warsaw, the Finnish delegation accompanied by Polish representatives had a chance to visit the National Institute of Geriatrics, Rheumatology and Rehabilitation with its director as the guide, and was welcomed by the chefs of different clinics and departments. They also participated in the bi-weekly gymnastics class organized for the members of Warsaw Regional Branch of Association of People with Rheumatism and their Friends.

All delegates took part in a networking meeting in headquarters of the Federation, where everyone could ask questions and discuss different solutions and theories with the Finnish guests.

After learning about the situation in Poland, the Finnish team invited delegates of Federation "REF" to Helsinki to meet and learn about the way their association is structured, the way they organize different activities with the support of volunteers. During their stay, Polish delegates participated in a meeting at the Reumaliitto headquarters, where they met the team and learned about the way their

office is organized. Among other things, Polish delegation learned how their Finnish partners fundraise through the sale of advertisements and running of an online shop, and how they used it to build the public image of their organization. During a meeting, they were presented physical activities with life trainer and with other way using audiovisual tools. They also learnt how to reach people living with RMDs using different media – for example magazines, website (one address for all), social networking sites – and how to work together with health professionals to obtain information for the rheumatological patients.

At the networking breakfast, various activities, as well as a care package for rheumatic children and a planned one for teenagers were presented. In all presentations, the role of volunteer support was highlighted.

The Polish delegation also visited a member association in Turku. This organization has its own rehabilitation center with contracted services for not only rheumatic diseases, especially those in children. At the association's headquarters, activities for different interest groups are available. According to the schedule, members can participate in activities such as: knitting, sewing, postcard and greeting card decoration and parlour games. All groups work like self-help and support groups. The Turku association publishes a magazine that contains useful information aimed at the rheumatic patients of this region.

On 27th October 2018, a summary and follow-up meeting for 13 delegates from the member associations was organized in Warsaw. Polish representatives presented the results of their visit to Finland. The delegates also accepted the goal of finding a source of volunteers for long-time cooperation with their organizations, using their Finnish counterparts' experiences in this field.