

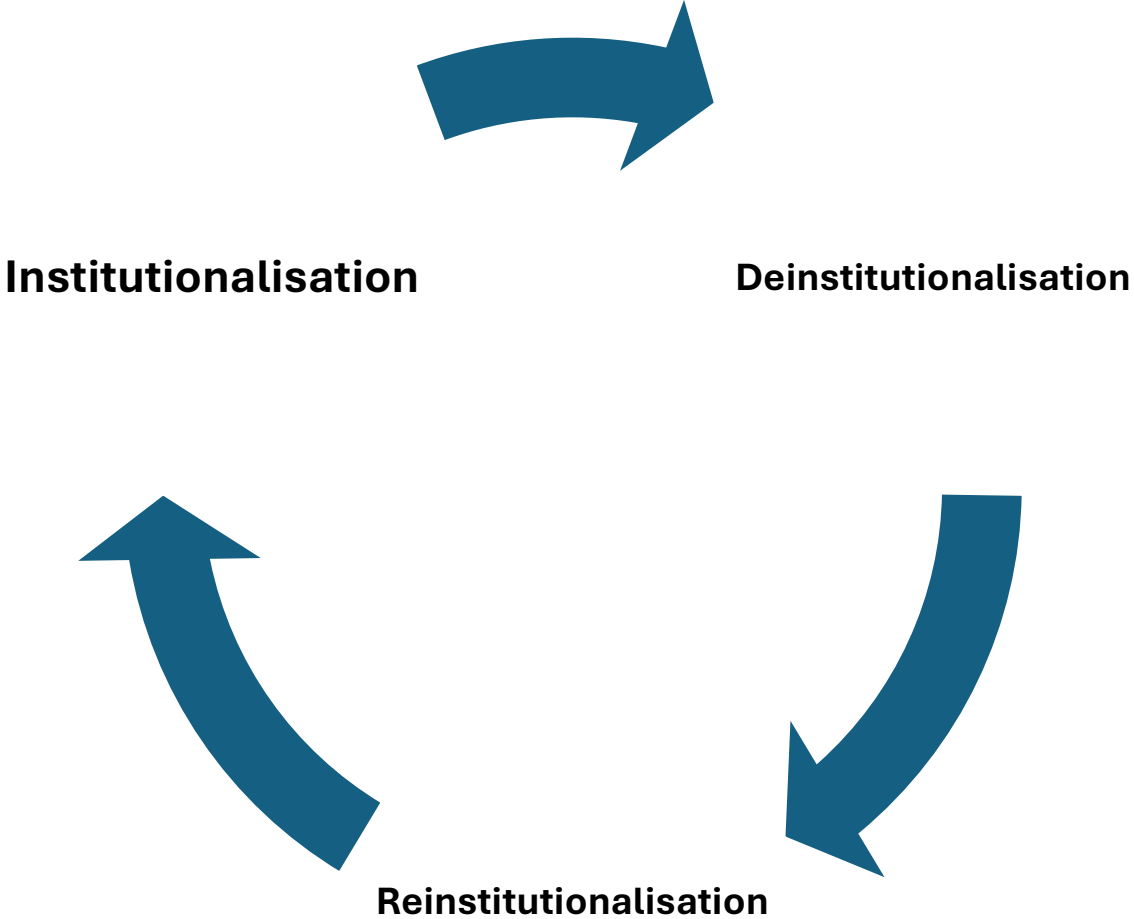


Experiential Knowledge and Dialogical Connection in Community-Based Mental Health Support

FAHRIYE OFLAZ & GONCA POLAT
İYİ SOCIAL COOPERATIVE



Setting the Scene: Mental Health Services in Turkey



Ottoman Era: Institutionalisation



Süleymaniye Bimarhanesi



Amasya Bimarhanesi

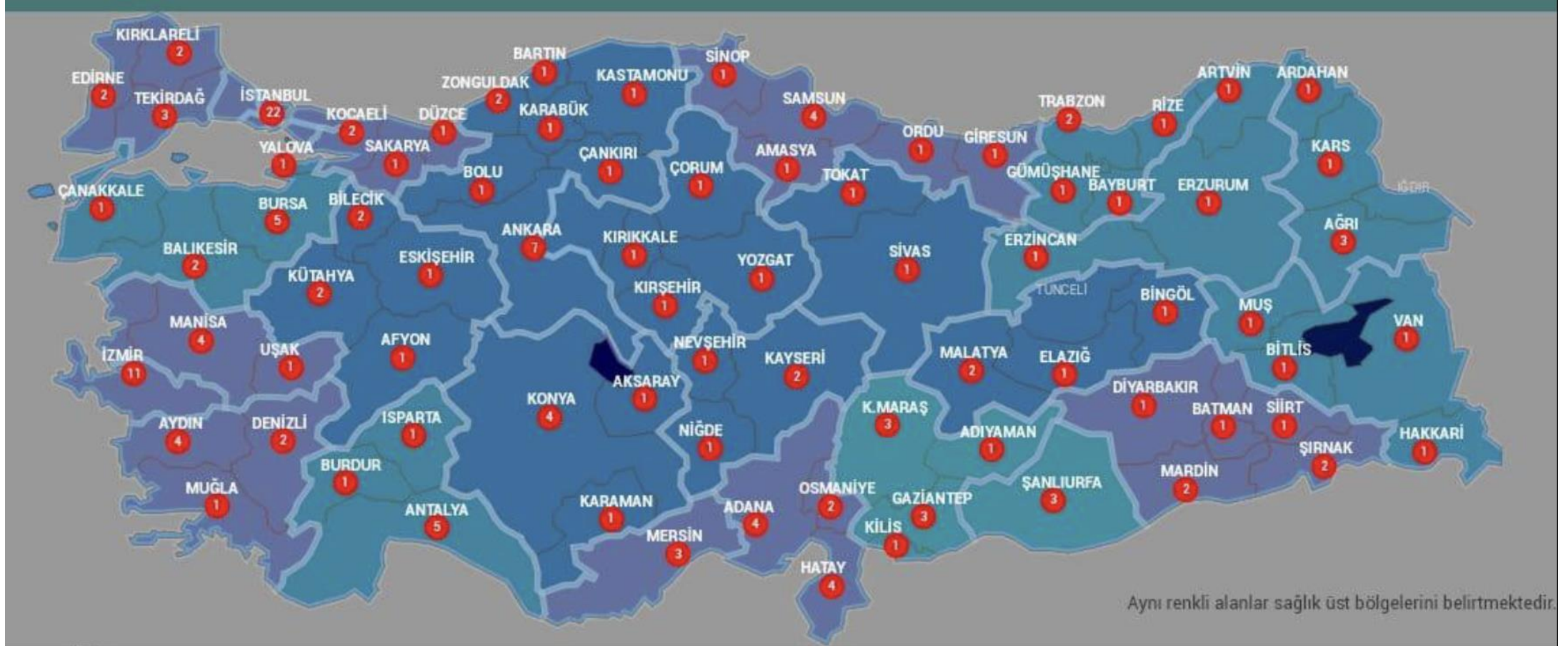
Republic Period: Widespread Institutionalisation (1926- 1980s)



After 2010s- Deinstitutionalisation

- National Mental Health Action Plan---> Community- Hospital Balance Model
- Community Mental Health Centers (TRSM)
 - Decentralising services to local units
 - Still usually attached to hospitals
- Psychosocial Support
- Continuity and Follow-up
- Rehabilitation Activities

Community Mental Health Centers



Re-institutionalisation- Today

- Establishment of large «city hospitals» and increased beds in psychiatric clinics



Adana



Samsun



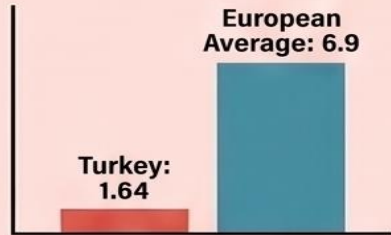
Ankara

MAJOR CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS



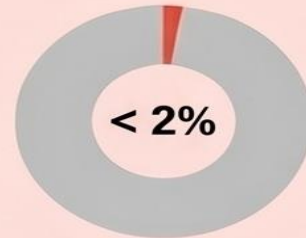
The Missing Mental Health Law

Turkey currently lacks a dedicated Mental Health Law to regulate involuntary hospitalization and protect the legal rights of patients and professionals.



Critical Workforce Shortages:

Psychiatrists (per 100k people)
Turkey has only 1.04 psychiatrists per 100,000 people, significantly lower than the European average of 9.9 per 100,000.



Chronic Undertunding: Mental Health Budget (% of Total Government Health Budget)

Mental health receives less than 2% of the total government health budget, with much of that still directed toward remaining large hospitals rather than community centers.



Social Stigma and "NIMBY" Syndrome

Progress is hindered by persistent social distance, negative media portrayals, and the "Not in My Backyard" (NIMBY) resistance to local mental health facilities.

Highlights

- Lack of a Mental Health Act

- Ethical debates on involuntary admission and autonomy
- Staff shortage- lack of variety
- Limited employment support

- Dominance of medical perspective & lack of HRP

- Limited to no space for recovery
- Lack of solidarity practices among mental health NGOs
- Social stigma

The Needs Behind İYİ Social Cooperative

- Need to person-centered recovery approach
- Need to remind rights- based approach in mental health services
- Need for independent living
- Need for solidarity
- Need to form a new way of relationship- a non-hierarchical one- among service users, service providers and caregivers

What makes IYI a «good practice example»?

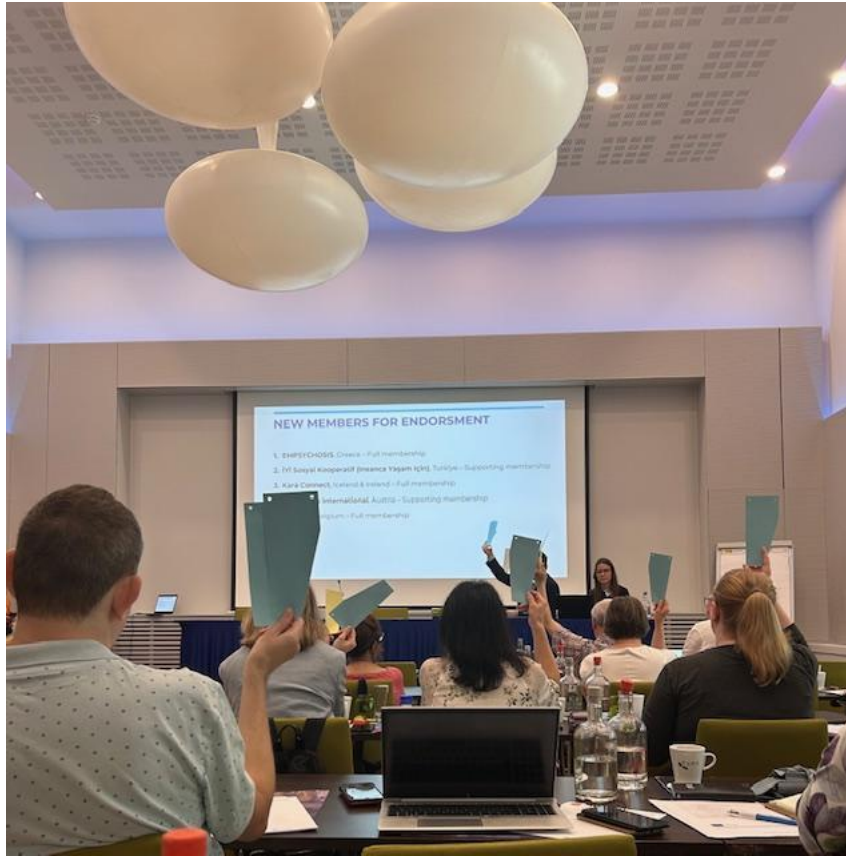
- System is organised according to medical model;
 - ***Medication adherence is the goal***
 - ***Non-hospitalization is the success***
- Service users are not seen as a subjects/agents.
- Equal relationship does not exist both in mental health institutions and in the family.
- IYI offers an alternative and enables such an experience for the first time- for all parties.

Establishment of İYİ Social Coop.

2018- The Collective formed by service users, service providers, caregivers.

2022- Formal establishment of the Cooperative in İstanbul

International Cooperations



Mental Health Europe, 2025



CARe Network, 2025

Areas we work:

Coproduction

- Production of a non-hierarchical knowledge model for mental health and social services
- Questioning dominant mental health paradigm

Coproduction

Psychosocial Conversations: Breaking the Mold

- Challenging the psychosocial stereotypes of the system



Gazhane, Kadıköy
Social Facility of Municipality

Breaking the mold- Some topics we discussed

- Forced hospitalization
- Who is responsible for mental health and mental recovery?
- Limits in Health Problems and the Hero Inside Us.
- What is (and isn't) the mental health law, what can (and cannot) it do?
- Diagnosis in Mental Health.
- A Glimpse into the Medicalization Journey of Psychiatry: DSM
- Mental/Spiritual/Mind Health Concepts and History.

Coproduction:

- 2019- Symposium: Peer Support and Community Based Services



Coproduction: Workshops

- 2018- Workshop against Stigma: «Ask me once»



Coproduction: Workshops at Symposiums



2024 Social Work Symposium:
Workshop on Ableism in mental
health and social services



Raising Voice

- Make experiential knowledge seen and available for the public and professionals
- Creating a space for self-expression.

Arts&Talks



Film Discussion Sessions



Art Brut Workshops



Art Brut Workshop: Anti-super heroes

Recovery and Empowerment

- Weekly Tea & Conversation meetings
- Peer support
- Open Dialogue

“Tea Talks on Saturdays — Create together & Enjoy together,”



- Emotional weather check-in meetings : every other week on Mondays, online (2026)
- Music for awareness: The alchemy of emotions. 9-16-23 April, 2026

Reflecting on IYI Experience: Challenges and Limitations

- Open Dialogue?
 - but without the family
 - & without the doctor
- Peer support
 - Are we peers, or are we just friends? Some boundary issues!
 - What is support? Some cultural reflections
 - Being in an informal, fluid relationship
- Learning from different working cultures
 - Facing the ableism in academia
 - Working under uncertainty
 - Being open to what the day brings!

Thank you for your contributions!

Fahriye & Gonca

«Recovery is only possible with Democracy»