



# PEER SUPPORT EMPLOYEMENT SPECIALIST

A french experience



# Introduction

Peer work in France  
An exemplary pathway

# Peer support workers in France

- Contrary to others countrys recovery concept and peer workers start to work with medical initiative contrary to the first psychiatry users movment .

# A part of my peer support worker story...

**2014**

The first IPS program  
is create

**2019**

The first funding is given  
to us for the platform

**2012**

Experimental project of  
education  
« Peer support worker » with  
CCOMS

**2019**

Work on project  
financing for the  
platform ESPER Pro

**2022**

development of the  
peer worker  
platform project on  
a regional scale





# **Hystory of peer support in France**

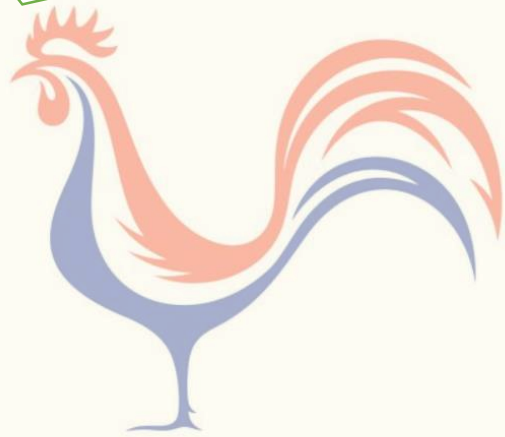
The very beginning

The beginning

Peer work in mental health organizations

# The very beginning

Cock-a-doodle doo !



Pinel délivrant les aliénés à la Salpêtrière en 1795. Tableau de Tony Robert-Fleury.



# The beginning



**1950's** - Institutional Psychotherapy (François Tosquelles, Jean Oury) : patient participation and peer support

**1980's** - Fight against HIV and AIDES : the pioneers in peer work

**1990's** - Harm reduction in addiction : the beginning of the peer workers recognition

**2000's** - Expert-patients for chronic disease



# Peer support workers in mental health organizations

**2005** – Publication of the law authorizing the creation and financing of self-support groups

**2007** – Mobile psychiatric teams : the first peer workers in mental health teams

**2011** – Housing First experimentation : the presence of peer workers is included in the specifications

**2012** – National Peer worker program of the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre in mental health : training and work integration support





# The current state

Peer work vocational training and  
education

Focus on the south-east region

Average wage and working time

# PW vocational training and education

**CCOMS** - Bachelor's degree in health and social science, "peer mediation" option

**Lyon University** - University degree « Peer support in Mental Health » (2022)

**Tours University** - University degree « Peer-to-peer Support » (2023)

**Paris University** - Bachelor of Health and Social Sciences, Peer ombudsperson program (2020)

**Bordeaux University** - Bachelor's degree in social intervention, « peer health ombudsperson » (2022)

**Aix-Marseille University** - University degree « Mental health recovery » (2022)

**CoFoR (Marseille, Lille, Paris)** - Recovery training centre (2017)

# Focus on the south-east region



**42 peer workers in organizations**

Mental health services :  
4

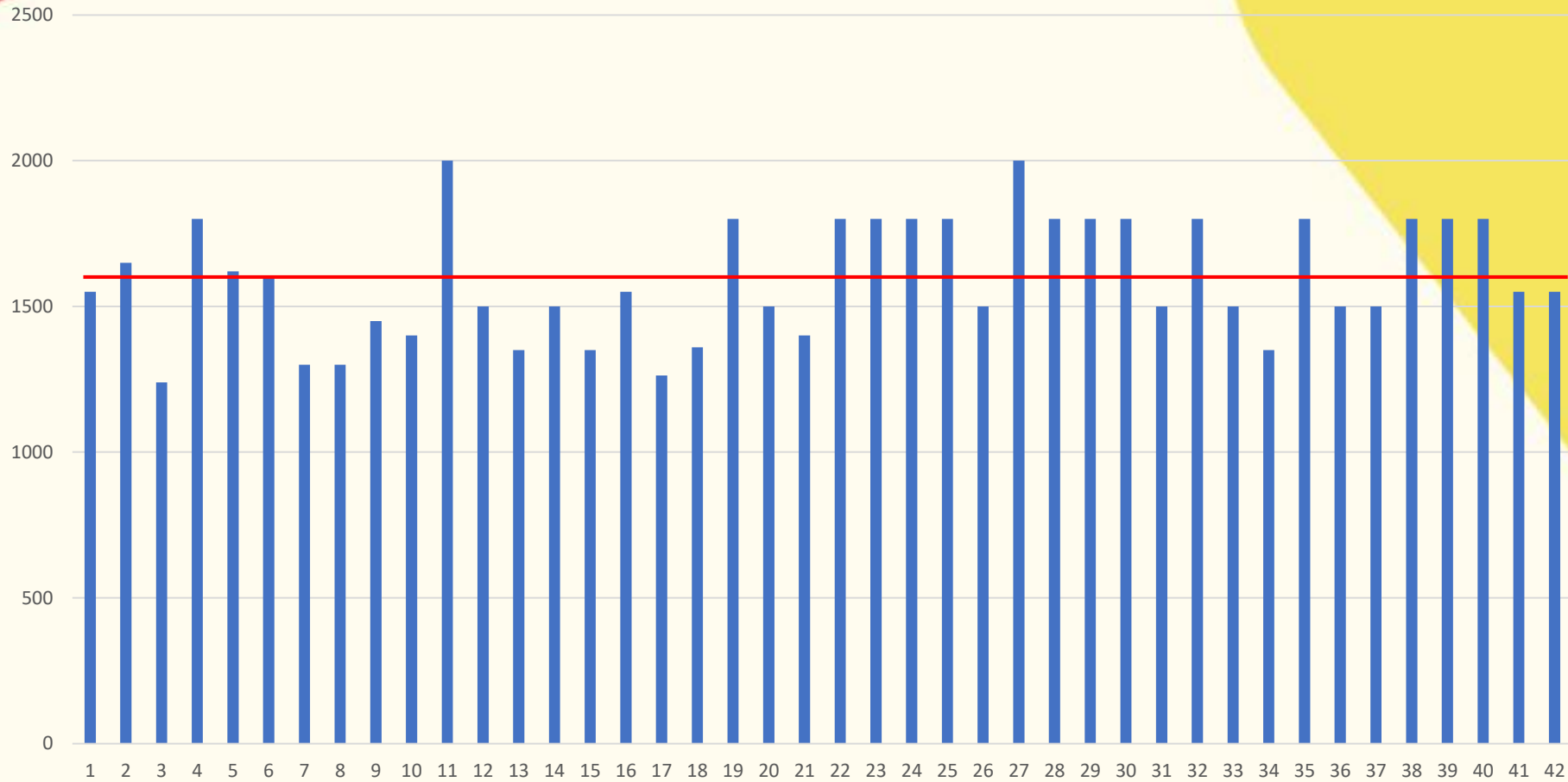
Communauteary MH services  
: 28

Social services : 7

Employement support  
services : 3

# Peer Workers wages

in 2022



**NB - Monthly french median wage : 1600 €** (counted on a full working time basis)

# Work hours of peer workers

Working time in full time equivalent



# Peer workers integration in mental health teams

Some preconceived ideas

Basic guidelines

Challenges

Living experience knowledge

Peer support tools

Benefits and added value

## Some preconceived ideas about peer workers

- Are likely to adopt an "anti-psychiatric" stance and thus undermine the care pathway
- Sometimes lacking in initial or specific training, would participate in the deskilling of other professionals.
- Are said to have difficulties in their relationship with patients or ex-patients and in finding the "right distance" with the public they have worked with in the past. It would frequently "resonate" with certain situations; this could weaken them.
- Would be in difficulty in their relationship with patients or ex-patients and in finding the "right distance" with the public they have frequented in the past. It would frequently "resonate" with certain situations ; this could weaken them



# Basic guidelines

- Does not replace other professionals but completes the care offered
- Based on the client's dream
- Contributes to the definition of meaningful goals with the client, in order to get him/her involved
- Relies on the network
- Promotes his/her own and the person's recovery in all areas of life (employment, housing, leisure, interpersonal relationships... )
- Contributes to the organization of the service in order to respect the temporality of clients
- Embodies hope in recovery and might serve as a source of inspiration
- Promotes horizontal relationships between clients and teams
- Contributes to the decompartmentalization of practices
- Translates the medical language from the doctor to the user and vice versa





# Challenges

- Difficulties related to recruitment, continuous training and support,
- Tension between self and in-between: the peer helper is on the border of both worlds,
- Lack of preparation of the professional environment for the reception,
- Concerning the peer helper himself: there is a risk that the peer helper exceeds his working hours and is too much in contact with people suffering from burnout.



# Expérience Knowledge

- The basis of peer support worker profession and the first and essential tool
- Sharing his history of set and recovery « exemplarity »
- Unconditional acceptance of the persons concerned
- Breaks the stigma, helps to make people less lonely, facilitates the therapeutic alliance.
- Reinforces the autonomy of the persons concerned, their citizenship, and the empowerment



## Some tools

- Motivational interview (decisional balance, etc.)
- Strength approach
- Recovery scales
- Active listening
- Maastricht questionnaire
- Action plans
- Open dialogue approach
- IPS model
- Joint crisis plan
- Self-help groups (voice hearer groups, etc.)
- WRAP®



# Benefits and added value

- Better therapeutic alliance between the users and the team (privileged interlocutors - intermediary)
- Better management of complex situations
- Personal knowledge of the use of the structures
- Use of specific adapted and individualized tools
- A different perspective that allows for open exchanges
- Availability - Flexibility which allows to meet the persons before the accompaniment
- To free oneself from the caregiving posture
- Defocus on symptoms, social problems and health issues
- Build on experiential knowledge and empower professionals to use their experience as a resource (allow for a more sensitive approach)
- Complementarity
- Use of informal time

# Peer worker as employment specialist in IPS teams

Experience knowledge with « no work »

The PW's missions in a IPS team

Benefits for peer workers themselves

Benefits for IPS clients

Benefits for others Employment  
Specialists

## Living experience with « no work »

- Difficulty in projecting oneself into the world of work
- Self-esteem problems
- Improving the feeling of personal efficiency
- To have the feeling of developing social utility
- Time structuring
- How to explain the gaps in the resume
- Learn to valuing personal experiences as professional skills

## **PW'missions in IPS teams**

- He works with the job candidate on aspects of the illness or history that may affect employment (reassure the persons)
- Collaborates with the care network to share observations and coordinate
- Treats employment support as a form of indirect care
- Promotes individual engagement
- Maintains collaboration in decision making

# Benefits for peer workers themselves

I think there were two steps in my professional life of peer worker :

When I've become peer worker in 2012 and when I contribute to create IPS team in 2014.

- The first period learn me to accept myself and give me soft skills
- The second helped me in my self-confidence and with my hard skills



# Benefits for the clients

Embodies the hope of finding and keeping a job despite illness and the difficulties associated with

Can share their experiences of managing symptoms, treatment, the effects of self-stigma to find and keep a job

## Benefits for others employments specialists

- **Consultant functions:** relationship between clients and MH teams, understanding of complex client's situations, etc.
- **Trainer in living experience :** the effects of the disease, treatment, self-stigma, low self-esteem, etc. on finding and keeping a job
- **Mediator** between the client and his ES in complex situations



# **The current development of peer work in France**

Job coaching « IPS style » for peer workers

# Jobcoaching in peer support helping

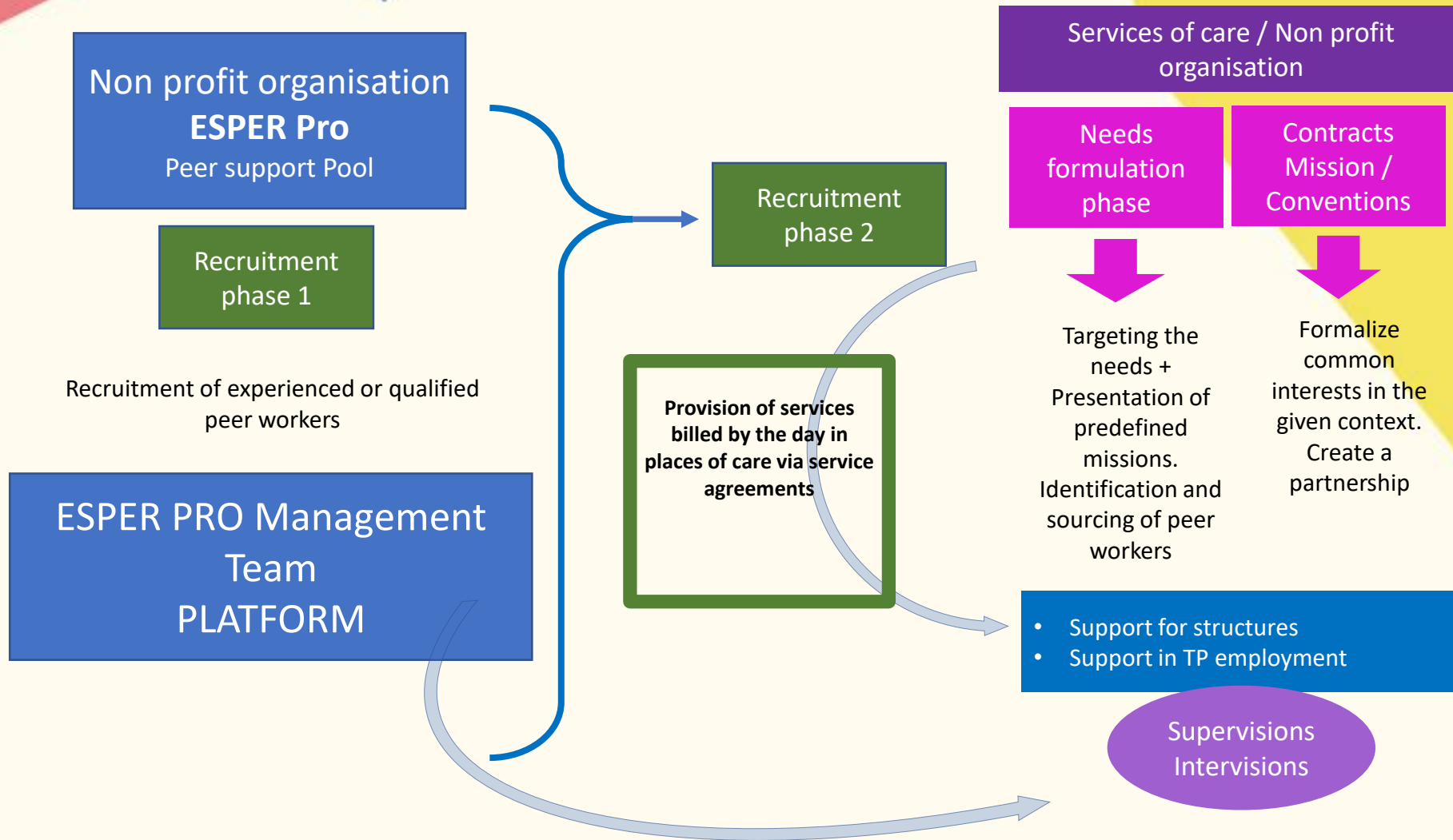
## A new model in the développement of peer support worker

Peer workers still suffer from certain representations and certain representations and come up against institutional institutional or administrative limits :

- The recruitment process
- The processing of applications, the professional status
- The professional status (which job title ?)
- The precariousness and lack of permanence of the positions ;
- The weakness of the accompaniment after
- The sometimes insufficient training of professionals
- The lack of training for PW, interviewing and listening techniques and a sometimes too superficial knowledge of existing services
- the tendency of MSPs to want to construct goals for the person being
- lack of preparation of the work environment
- Lack of preparation of the professional environment for the reception of MSP;
- The risk of burnout

The objective is to allow the deployment of peer work in the PACA region through the development of the network and the associative dynamics. The associative dynamic consists in proposing mission sheets to the novice peer support.

# OPERATING DIAGRAM



# Platforms : a springboard for recruiting peer helpers

It is therefore essential to support teams in a learning process. In this context, the use of peer helpers employed by a platform is useful for :

- Allow a team to test working with a peer helper without making too many recruitment commitments, for a limited time and a flexible duration.
- Allow working with a peer helper without them being perceived as competing with the professionals on the team.

# Others benefits of the platforms

- The platforms allow people who feel the need for peer support to have direct access to this service, without having to go through an institution.
- For the people concerned who wish to become peer helpers, the access door is wider.
- This makes it possible to recruit people who do not necessarily have a high level of education, sometimes precisely because of their health and life path, but who have a great deal of experiential maturity to share.

## Last but not least..

It's possible to imagine that the use of the services of peer helpers from a platform will be a springboard for mental health structures that will allow them, in a second phase, to recruit peer workers directly !

... Once the benefits of working with a peer helper have been recognized and shared.





Thank you for your  
attention !



Small group discussion



# Discussion topic

- Sourcing
- Job description
- Employment contract
- Job integration process
- Job retention tricks