

enabling people to build better lives.  
the hamlet trust



Building Better Lives



# Building a Sustainable Future

Hamlet supports individuals and groups as they rebuild their confidence and self esteem - giving them the strength and skills to rejoin their communities

“We all have the potential for a better future”

Vahid Djulovic

## A little DOES go a long way - Vahid's story

Vahid Djulovic is from Tuzla in Bosnia-Herzegovina and works at Fenix, a mental health non-governmental organisation which is an encouraging example of how, with a little help, huge strides can be made.

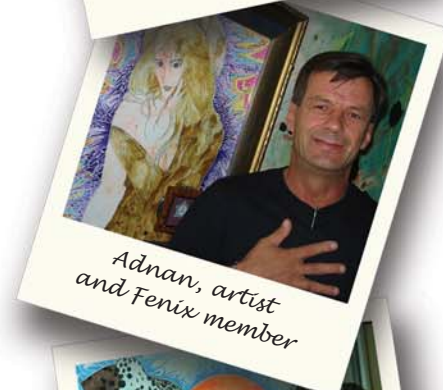
“After my experiences in the Bosnian war I fell ill and went into a psychiatric clinic. The stigma I felt made me feel like an outcast of society. As my self-confidence gradually returned, a number of us got together to try and improve our situation. Through Hamlet Trust we heard about other user-led projects, and we soon formed our own organisation, Fenix. At first we encountered incomprehension and suspicion from the local community, but gradually this changed.

Through Hamlet network workshops our organisation has become stronger, as we exchange ideas and experiences with others, and we are now better equipped to fight for our rights. Troubles will always appear but we all have the potential for a better future, no matter who we are.”

Fenix is typical of the kind of growth and inspiration that new groups find across the region when they become involved in the Hamlet Trust Network. From its foundation in 2000, Fenix has grown rapidly with support from Hamlet and it now lists the following amongst its many achievements:



Tuzla policy forum



Adnan, artist and Fenix member



Nusreta, Fenix and local policy forum member



Vahid down on the farm



Seeking the views of users

- Conducted comprehensive public research on attitudes to mental health.
- Established a network among users in Tuzla Canton, to support and guide people experiencing crisis and to raise awareness of their needs amongst the general public.
- Hosted Hamlet Trust's Local Policy Forum, which has helped to change legislation and champion the rights of people with mental health problems.
- Provides regular meetings of self-help groups
- Put on art exhibitions attracting country-wide media attention
- Supported a sheltered housing project for people leaving long term psychiatric care
- Established agricultural and jewellery-making employment projects.
- Produced numerous publications to inform users of human rights
- Trains volunteers to reach out to isolated people.

## Poverty and Human Rights Abuse

Mental health problems can devastate lives. World Health Organisation research shows that **1 in 4 people** will experience some kind of mental health problem at some point in their lives.

Hamlet Trust works in a region with a combined population of over 350 million people. Consequently there are a potential 87 million vulnerable people left marginalised and discriminated against because of mental health problems. The services and support available to them are often inadequate and outdated, if any exist at all. Any financial help given is frequently set **below the poverty line** – currently defined as \$1US per day.

The views of people with mental health problems in Tuzla Canton, Bosnia are typical of the situation throughout the region:



*Prof Helen Hally  
Chair, Board of Trustees*



### Message from the Chair

I have recently taken over this important and challenging role and find I come to Hamlet Trust at a significant time in its organisational life. 2005 is proving to be a natural time for rationalisation and evolution. At this point the Hamlet network is well established and is fast maturing to a level of self-sufficiency. During 2004 three of Hamlet's major international projects successfully concluded and, as you can read elsewhere in Building Better Lives, each is continuing independently with the Trust assuming a less hands-on role. Hamlet Trust continues, from our London office, to help develop the organisational capacity of our Network Member Organisations through funding opportunities as well as support visits. Hamlet is also currently assessing the potential benefits of extending our networking approach to other areas of the world. Our support in 2004 for the establishment of a Mental Health Policy Forum in Kerala, India, and the invitation we took up to visit Tanzania recently are providing insights into how we may be able to work with many more people experiencing mental health problems, their families and their communities to help them build better lives. We look forward to strengthening existing partnerships and evolving many new and exciting collaborations.

Professor Helen Hally  
Chair of the Board of Trustees  
& National Director, Race for Health  
June 2005



*Georgian members  
join the Network*

### How we do it

Hamlet Trust is a registered charity in the UK and a company limited by guarantee. We operate as a development agency and how we work is flexible to reflect the needs of member organisations as they arise. Hamlet Trust employs a small, highly experienced staff team based in London, and supports growing numbers of Regional Associates and Local Policy Coordinators based in the countries in which we work.

### Activities include:

Organisation of national and international **training workshops**, east-east and east-west **study visits**, provision of small grants, quarterly **newsletters**, monthly **updates on our website** and periodical **publications** and **toolkits** to promote awareness and help organisations strengthen their capacity.

2004 saw Hamlet's first **International Conference**, the conclusion to the highly successful Pathways to Policy programme. Hamlet also acts as an **umbrella organisation** to champion the rights of our network members on an international level.

### Hamlet Trust believes...

**that people with experience of mental health problems and their families should always be involved in the development and running of the resources, services and policies which affect their lives.**

By being a part of Hamlet's international network, across central & eastern Europe and central Asia, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are able to share experiences, learn from each other, and to work in partnership with policy-makers. Through this direct involvement in decision-making Hamlet's Network is able to build better lives.

### In 16 years Hamlet has:

- supported and developed **65 NGOs** in 18 different countries. Over 8,000 people a year benefit from Hamlet's work.
- supported the establishment of over **30 employment projects**
- developed **10 advocacy groups** or **legal support services**
- been involved in establishing and supporting a minimum of **9 resource/day centres**, **42 self help groups**, as well as helping with at least **6 specialist 'bricks and mortar' accommodation projects**.

- 47%** receive such poor monthly social benefits that they do not even cover food expenditure
  - Only 4%** have full-time work, largely because of discrimination amongst employers
  - 87%** have very little social life and rarely go out
  - 63%** are unhappy with the support they get from the local health services.
- After recent social and political upheavals many countries introduced reasonably sensitive mental health legislation. However no resources have been set aside to ensure effective implementation. As a result the rights of people with mental health problems are being abused every day
- They are locked up in psychiatric hospitals against their will – (almost all the wards that Hamlet Trust staff have ever visited are locked).
  - They are still kept in caged beds (in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia and Slovenia) or kept tied to beds wearing a nappy for weeks on end.
  - Many currently living in hospitals, have no passports and therefore no 'legal' existence.
  - Guardianship orders designed to protect vulnerable people have instead left them trapped, with all their rights as individuals 'legally' removed, totally vulnerable and open to abuse.
  - They often have no access to phones and therefore cannot contact family, lawyers or advocates for assistance.
  - Shoestring budgets mean appalling living conditions, due to low staffing levels and inadequate diets, hygiene and health support.
  - In these hospitals morbidity rates are as high as 45%.

Hamlet Trust uses the terms "users", "service users" and "people with mental health problems" interchangeably.

## Building Network Connections

Hamlet Trust values the forging of links between people with differing perspectives and experiences, encouraging cooperation and collaboration

“Having our views heard makes a huge difference”

A mental health service user on the Pathways to Policy programme.

### Pathways to Policy – involving users to create change

Over 3 years Hamlet's Pathways to Policy programme, funded by the UK Community Fund, proved a strong example of Hamlet successfully breaking down barriers.

The challenge? To enable service users and carers, initially in 6 countries, to play a meaningful role in mental health policymaking.

Hamlet Network Member Organisations (NMOs) responded by motivating a cross-section of local stakeholders to work together under the leadership of people with mental health problems. Filling the policy vacuum with positive action, not waiting for someone else to do something.

The culmination of the programme was a major international conference in October 2004 held in Slovenia. Over 120 participants attended from 15 countries, with representatives from 3 international policymaking bodies and 28 national and international NGOs.

The success of this Hamlet initiative demonstrates that confident, proactive organisations can make a real difference to the development of mental health policy in their countries. Users work as equal partners with other stakeholders such as lawyers, journalists,

politicians and health professionals, and are invaluable participants in this process of political and civil change.



**COMMUNITY FUND**  
Lottery money making a difference

### Some Outcomes

**International Co-operation:** Hamlet is now included as consultant to the World Health Organisation's International Mental Health Policies planning body to ensure users views are represented.

**Instituting change:** six 'local policy forums' established in Estonia, Bosnia, Romania, Armenia, Kyrgyz Republic and India. Four continue working at local or national level, hosted by Hamlet NMOs.

**Collaboration:** over 2000 people in six countries now involved in mental health policy design and implementation.

**Breaking down barriers:** in Romania a partnership with a local radio station enabled users to tell of their own experiences in the psychiatric system, so raising awareness of mental health in the local community.

**Genuine improvements:** forum work is leading to improvements in people's lives in the short term, and will offer hope to thousands more for years to come.

“Working together we really can make changes that improve people's lives”

A social worker from Estonia

### Building new initiatives

Jane Shears, Development Co-ordinator, is looking forward to working in partnership with new regional initiatives including:

- user-led research and evaluation of services in Ukraine;
- early intervention/support for young people experiencing first episodes in Estonia;
- involvement in a state supported forum that will carry out the revision and then implementation of mental health legislation in Georgia;
- advocacy projects in hospitals in Romania aimed at protecting the patients' human rights, with the projects run by ex-service users trained as advocates
- developing relationships with mental health NGOs in Tanzania and jointly formulating long-term work plans.





*Alkent*

### Alkent's Story

Alkent Birko, a member of the Alternativa Association, Albania, and an employee in their successful candle workshop, tells us;

"I had recently experienced mental health problems and was isolated and lonely. A friend told me about Alternativa, a Hamlet NMO, run by and for people in my situation. When I came along I quickly found that I was not alone, and this was a great relief for me. Now I spend 3-6 hours a day at the centre.

It's really important for users to be involved in something, to gain skills, and this provides the perfect opportunity. For me, having the chance to talk with my new friends over a cup of coffee in breaks between work is very important. This job provides a good part-time income, but just as importantly, it is a good place to share problems and come up with solutions together.



*Leonid*

### Job creation in Ukraine

Leonid Kleschov, a member of Hamlet NMO Friends Union in Kyiv, has experienced the mental health system in Ukraine. His story is typical:

"My life changed for the better when Hamlet Trust gave a grant to establish a local self-help group in Kyiv. We set up an employment project to renovate and redecorate flats and now I earn my living as an electrician. I've taken control of my life!"

Here Leonid and his colleagues are receiving on-the-job training as part of the Friends Union employment project seed-funded by Hamlet, that subsequently received financial assistance from the EU.



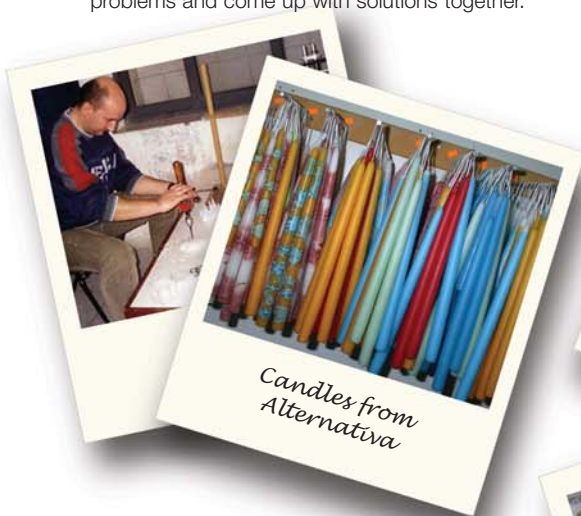
*Gabriela and Mihaela*

### Mihaela's story

Twenty-six year old Mihaela Tanasan lives with her mother Gabriela, in an apartment in the small northern town of Campulung, Romania. In 2002 she started to work as a part-time IT support worker at the local psychiatric hospital, the same hospital where her mother had been an in-patient on several occasions over a number of years. Mihaela also took on the post as Local Policy Co-ordinator (LPC) to Hamlet Trust's Pathways to Policy programme, as a job-share with her mother.

"Having a parent with a mental health problem has given me a unique insight. I was 13 or 14 when my mum first became unwell and initially I didn't understand what was happening. Yet gradually, as I visited her in hospital, supported her at home and also met other people in distress, I began to gain a better understanding of the difficulties and barriers experienced by people with mental health problems.

The LPC post has provided me with opportunities to really make things happen. I'm not ashamed of the fact that my mum is a user, she has just as many talents as any of us. Together we are trying to give a voice to others who have been excluded. By challenging the image of people with mental health problems we want to show that they can play a full part in society."



*Candles from Alternativa*



*Job training at Friends Union*

The future is exciting. We plan to expand the workshop to create more job opportunities so more people can benefit from the re-socialising effect it has. We are also forming a group for parents of people with mental health problems. Parents often feel that the medical professionals are almost like gods, and I want to help change this impression, to show them that doctors can only be one element in the process of treating mental health problems.

Another plan we are developing at Alternativa is to set up an advocacy project. Changing attitudes is always easier when users work together. As somebody who was labelled 'crazy', I was afraid to express my feelings and thought that I had nothing to offer.

Now I realise that I can offer so much."



*Mihaela at work*

*Mihaela with members of the Kyrgyz forum at Hamlet's International Policy Conference.*

# Building Strong Foundations

Hamlet uses cost-effective and sustainable methods to develop strong organisations, so ensuring people's lives change for the better...for good



## Small Grants making a big difference

Hamlet Trust's Small Grants Programme is funded by the Open Society Institute (OSI) as one of the ways it supports our activities.

Since 1997, Hamlet Trust has paid out \$679,997 in 127 grants to its Network Member Organisations. These grants have directly helped over 6700 people, an average spend of just \$101 (i.e. £54) per person. And this is to say nothing of the thousands of indirect beneficiaries among family, friends and communities.

Hamlet provides the framework to respond to mental health needs. We issue and monitor grants, typically over 12-month periods and set at a maximum of \$10,000. Ideas for the projects come from the service users themselves – not imposed by others – and they are actively involved in all aspects of their realisation. Working on a small scale means that the projects are highly focussed, with benefits for both the organisation and the individual.

Independent evaluation in 2004 showed '97% of beneficiaries feel that projects have a positive effect on their lives and teach them new skills'. Comments included: "this helps me understand my illness", "coming here gives meaning to my life", "I have new self-confidence".

The benefits of a Hamlet grant is felt for years after it has been deployed: the organisations become adept at developing viable, sustainable project proposals. This means that they are able to seek support from other sources, not remain dependent on Hamlet. Individuals also acquire personal and employment skills to help them build a better future.



OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE

“ I was not alone in my problems ”

### A Slovenian story

Igor Uhan is Project Manager at Mir Sreče, which translates as "Peace and Happiness", an innovative Slovenian organisation and a member of Hamlet's Network. They received a start-up grant from us in 2001. Mir Sreče brings together people with mental health problems to support each other in a friendly environment doing ordinary things such as tea parties, singles' nights, art exhibitions and concerts.

From within this group they also reach out to provide much-needed support for people receiving long-term care by visiting them in hospital or in their homes. They also act as a source of information for families and carers to better enable them to cope.

Through Igor, members tell us how they have changed their lives by being involved in Mir Sreče:

"Savo is a trained artist whose serious depression prevented him working and functioning normally. Things improved in Savo's life after Mir Sreče organised a workshop where a whole group of people were encouraged to collaborate on one large painting. Savo told me '**Finally, after two years of depression I began to paint again**'.

"Sumedija is a young woman who felt alone because her parents were having trouble coming to terms with her illness. By making friends at Mir Sreče, Sumedija has gained the strength to begin dealing with her problems. '**I feel normal with your help**' she says.

"Peter was brought to Mir Sreče by his neighbour. Her friend, Peter's mother, was desperate because he seemed to be doing nothing with his life. He hadn't left his room for months, he wouldn't talk to anyone and sometimes he wouldn't even eat. We started visiting Peter in his home and slowly gained his trust. Though he still has low periods, after only a year he has become an active member of the group and his mental health is improving. He told me, '**Mir Sreče saved my life**'."

### Advocacy in Georgia helping to change lives

A stronger voice for people with mental health problems is the key to protecting their human rights. This is demonstrated in Georgia, where Hamlet's support and funding for an advocacy project, set up in partnership with the Georgian Association for Mental Health (GAMH), has had excellent results.

In an example of effective self-help, 6 ex-users of mental health services were trained as advocates to help champion the rights of their peers. To date this project has successfully supported over 150 people to take back control of their lives.

Since leaving hospital one user, Valentina C and her partner, had been living for years without gas and electricity. Their many attempts to get help had gone unheeded. However, after an advocate intervened, their problems were quickly solved. "Our rights have been restored. I hope that my advocate will be around to support me and protect my rights again in the future."

Nona Abshilava is one of the advocates. She explains "We help 'locked' people communicate with the outside world. I helped my clients to get the benefits they were entitled to, and I also gained a great amount of knowledge about my own human rights."



Members of the Georgian Association for Mental Health, founders of the advocacy project





*Aziya*

**Winds of change in Kyrgyzstan - Aziya's story**

Aziya Kydykova is a member of Oasis of Soul, a Hamlet Network Member Organisation in Kyrgyzstan. They received a grant of \$2,000 from Hamlet Trust in July 2003 to organise a mental health users' group.

**Aziya tells us....**

"In June 2002 I had just come out of psychiatric hospital. At a meeting organised by Mental Health and Society (another Hamlet NMO) I began to understand for the first time that as a user of mental health services I have a voice. I realised that I was not alone in my problems, and that by forming our own self-help group we could support each other. Hamlet Trust helped us to do just that.

In Kyrgyzstan it is difficult to speak out about users' problems, to defend our rights and lobby our government, but we are already starting to change things for the better. It depends on us: on our strategy, our intelligence and our willpower.

Now through Oasis of Soul we have been able to make users' voices heard. We have been able to press for and get improved conditions in the hospitals, and begin to change attitudes towards people with mental health problems in society.

These days I no longer feel vulnerable, and am less afraid I will go back into hospital. I have confidence in myself now, and because of this I feel optimistic about my future."

Sharing expertise and building on successful approaches that bring real change in mental health services is at the heart of Hamlet Trust. We work in genuine partnership with local NGOs to find the best ways to have the most impact. Whether it is better psychiatric care, lobbying senior health officials or underpinning social enterprises one thing guides all that we do – empowering others to make their voices heard.

**Building on success**

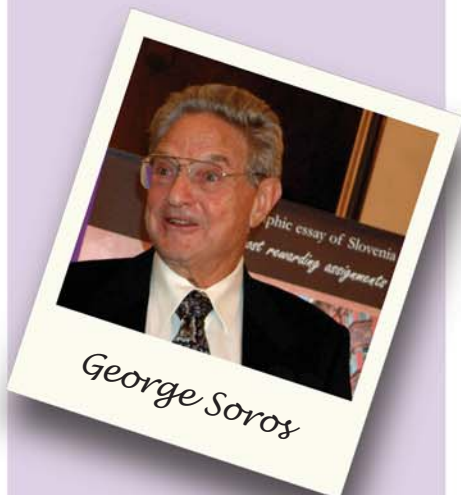
Hamlet Trust celebrated its first 15 years of achievement in mental health in late 2003 with 100 invited guests at a reception in central London.

George Soros, guest of honour, is founder of the Open Society Institute – major supporters of Hamlet for over 10 years. He praised survivors of the psychiatric system in Hamlet's region for "showing vision and commitment" in rebuilding lives.

"Hamlet Trust's network is leading the way in the critical areas of advocacy, social enterprise and policy reform", he said, "and helping to ensure that those with mental health problems can fully participate as stakeholders in society".

Hamlet is looking to the future by planning the launch of a 'Friends Network' with a view to building a broader supporter base in the UK and around the world. We must help safeguard the future of innovative mental health work in years to come.

Hamlet Trust has proved that a little really CAN go a long way to support people with mental health problems as they are building better lives. Please contact us if you would like details of how you or your organisation can help us to achieve this.



*George Soros*

*Guest of Honour George Soros*



*Riina*

**Riina's story**

Riina Kenn is involved with NGO Davy, a self help group for people with mental health problems in Tartu, Estonia. It is a Hamlet NMO and was first supported with a start-up grant in October 1998. She tells us:

"When I first came into contact with NGO Davy I was a student at the University of Tartu. My mother had died and after that I had experienced problems with my mental health. I felt isolated and alone but through NGO Davy I made new friends, people who understood my problems and taught me how to cope with them.

As a trained organist I wanted to play at my local church, but the congregation was unable to cope with my mental health problems and were against me having such responsibilities. Yet through my ongoing work as a project leader at NGO Davy I was able to feel equal to "healthy" people and my confidence grew.

Then the choirmaster at our church gave me a chance to play at the family service. Happily, as a result of this opportunity the Reverend noticed my talent and reliability. Now he often asks me to play at the full services.

I believe my involvement has helped many members of the congregation to conquer their fears and prejudices towards me and raise their awareness of the needs of people like me. Hamlet Trust and NGO Davy have had a great affect on my life: thanks to the self-help group I have learned to assert myself, to take control of my life again."

A recent grant from Hamlet trust to NGO Davy included the cost of purchasing several musical instruments. These have been used to set up a small band and singing group in the nearby village of Turi. All thanks to Riina's initiative and inspiration!

# Hamlet Trust Network Member Organisations



Albania

- Alternativa, Tirana



Armenia

- Arivatsag, Vanadzor
- Khnamk (Care), Yerevan



Bosnia-Herzegovina

- Behar, Mostar
- Fenix, Tuzla
- Savez (Network), nationwide
- Stella, Zenica
- Vita, Sarajevo



Bulgaria

- Detsata na Kubrat (Children of Kubrat), Sofia
- Zastapnici za Psihichno Zdrave (Sofia Advocacy Project), Sofia



Czech Republic

- Kolumbus, nationwide



Estonia

- Eesti Patsientide Esindusühing (Estonian Patients' Advocacy Association), Tallinn
- Eesti Psühhosotsiaalse Rehabilitatsiooni Ühing (Estonian Psychosocial Rehabilitation Association), Tartu
- Eesti Vaimse Tervise Ühingute Liit (Estonian Mental Health Association), Tallinn
- Iseseisev Elu (Independent Life), Tallinn
- Hingerahu (Serenity), Parnu
- Meelerahu (Peace of Mind), Tallinn
- NGO Davy, Tartu



Georgia

- Sakartvelos Psikiuri Janmrtelobis Asotsiatsia (Georgian Association of Mental Health), Tbilisi
- Advokaturis Proekti (Advocacy Project), Tbilisi
- Sakartvelos Uzerta Da Eqs-Uzerta Kavshiri (Georgian Users and Ex-Users Union), Tbilisi
- Guriis Qalta Janmrtelobis Dacvis Asotsiatsia (Patient Plus), Guria



Hungary

- Lélek-Hang Egyesület (Voice of Soul), Budapest
- Varázshegy Egyesület (Magic Hill), Budapest



Kyrgyzstan

- Psikhicheskoe Zdorovyie i Obschestvo (Mental Health and Society), Bishkek
- Oasis Dushy (Oasis of Soul), Bishkek



Lithuania

- Bičiulės (Friends), Kaunas
- Elektrenu Bendruomenės Iniciatyvu Centras (Elektrenai Community Initiative Centre), Elektrenai
- Klubas 13 ir Ko (Club 13 & Co), Vilnius
- Lietuvos Psichikos Sveikatos Paslaugu Vartotoju Draugija (Lithuanian Fellowship of Mental Health Care Users), Vilnius



Poland

- Nowe Braterstwo (New Brotherhood), Krakow
- Krakowska Fundacja Hamlet, Krakow
- Nadzieja (Hope), Bielsko-Biala
- Psyche, Bielsko-Biala
- Szansa (Chance), Warsaw



Romania

- Armonia, Timisoara
- Aripi, Bucharest
- Liga Româna pentru Sanatate Mintala (Romanian League for Mental Health), Bucharest
- Orizonturi, Campulung Moldovenesc



Slovenia

- Mir Sreče, Ljubljana
- Paradoks, Ljubljana
- Šent, Ljubljana • Vezi, Sežana



Ukraine

- Aгенство Spryannia Socialnomu Rosvytku (Social Development Support Agency), Kyiv
- Soyuz Druzey (Friends' Union), Kyiv
- Otrazhennyye Miry (Reflected Worlds), Kyiv
- Podderzhka (Support), Chernihiv

## Developing Partnerships

Azerbaijan

Belarus

Kerala, India

Macedonia

Moldova

Sverdlovsk oblast, Russian Federation

Serbia & Montenegro

Slovakia

Tanzania & Zanzibar

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