

## **The Mental Health Atlas Project. Development and implications for consumer empowerment**

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Context analysis for evidence informed policy should include the standard assessment of the service provision, placement and workforce capacity at local and global levels. Obstacles to the availability of comparable information on the service delivery system across local areas, regions and countries include the absence of a common terminology or a standard unit of analysis of care teams and services. Starting in 1994, the EPCAT group developed a battery of seminal instruments for the assessment of local care for adults experiencing mental illness in Europe. One of these instruments, the European Service Mapping Schedule (ESMS), was later adapted for mapping services in other sectors and population groups including chronic care and disabilities (DESDE-LTC). This instrument was incorporated to the REMAST tool for assessing Mental Health (MH) care in local areas in Europe. The ESMS/DESDE system has been used for mapping local services and for producing atlases of MH care in Europe, Australia and Latin America. Drug and alcohol, social services and chronic care provision have also been mapped in some areas. Local, regional and national distinctive patterns of mental health care began to emerge showing similarities and differences between districts and countries, between urban and rural care, and across sectors. This local context information can be incorporated to decision support systems, incorporated to visual tools for eliciting prior expert knowledge and for reducing uncertainty in policy planning. An important aspect in the development of local atlases is the involvement of local organisations of consumers and carers and the availability of the information in open access repositories as information on available social and health care is a major driver of consumer empowerment. Currently we are working in charting tools to facilitate navigation of the MH care system by consumers based on the atlases of MH.