CONCLUSION
Interviewees perceive the participation in groups effective to improve quality of life and well-being, through a better knowledge of problems and the sharing of experiences. According to the literature (Riesmann, 1965; Skovholt, 1974; Leuth & Arthur), these groups appear to perform psychological functions, such as perceived social support and increasing coping strategies, through the comparison with other members. Participants feel themselves increasing self-esteem and self-fulfillment. Moreover, these experiences promote empowerment, in accordance with community psychology and psychotherapy theories (Oliva, 1999). Finally, to attend a group seems to increase the well-being. Both Key Informants and group members (Professionals and Patients) perceive advantages in improved quality of life, greater well-being, and mitigation of disease. They also report a lower use of “pills”, fewer hospitalizations, a better socialization, which are thought as basic objectives for self-help groups.

REFERENCES

**Mental Health Europe Executive Committee**