



MENTAL HEALTH EUROPE



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Boulevard Clovis 7, B-1000 Brussels

Tel + 32 2 280 04 68

Fax + 32 2 280 16 04

Email: info@mhe-sme.org

Web site: <http://www.mhe-sme.org>

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With the summer holidays now behind us, Mental Health Europe has been as busy as ever. Our staff and Senior Policy Advisers have participated and presented in numerous conferences, while also preparing for World Mental Health Day, which we will celebrate by publishing a policy paper addressing the consequences of the financial crisis on the mental health of the population and the need for investing in appropriate community mental health care. Consequently, the mental health consequences of unemployment in older people will constitute the theme of our 2011 awareness-raising event at the European Parliament, which MEP Frieda Brepoels has agreed to hosting. But more on that in the following weeks.

Mental Health Europe has also received several requests for interviews in the previous weeks, and has featured in the European publication Europe & Me (<http://www.europeandme.eu/14brain/730-mental-health-in-europe>). This, of course, makes us very happy, as it means that mental health issues are finally getting covered by European media.

September also brought us the opportunity to meet with our partners in the Train!Improve! Reduce! Project, and plan the next steps of the program. During the second partners' meeting, we have heard some wonderful presentations on the research our partners carried out, which reinforced our belief that the police trainings will be most successful.

We would also like to remind you about our Extraordinary General Assembly on November 5, where members will be able to vote on changes in our structure.

There is never a dull moment at Mental Health Europe...

Mary Van Dievel, MHE Director

I. MENTAL HEALTH EUROPE

MHE NEWS AND POLICY WORK

Extraordinary general assembly to focus on statutes and priorities

Following a Board meeting on November 4, MHE is organizing an extraordinary General Assembly in Brussels on Saturday, November 5. During the first session MHE members will discuss the proposed changes in membership categories and also the changes in the organization's statutes. The following session will then be devoted to a dialogue on Mental Health Europe's priorities, agreed on by MHE and its members. Moreover, three MHE member organizations (Mind - England and Wales, the Greek Society for Mental Health and Social Psychiatry, and SENT - Slovenian Association for Mental Health) will each present their activities and explain how these are linked with the eight priorities discussed and approved at MHE's General Assembly, held on May 21. After the presentations, MHE will open the floor and expects a fruitful discussion among members.

For more information, please contact MHE Network Development Officer Yves Brand at yves.brand@mhe-sme.org

MHE Director participates in Know&Pol seminar

MHE Director Mary Van Dievel participated in a European End-Users High Level Seminar organized by the WHO Collaborating Centre for research and education in mental health, based in Lille, France. The seminar addressed the formulation, dissemination and implementation of mental health policies and practices in Europe and was built on the European Know&Pol (www.knowanspol.eu) project findings.

The Knowledge and Policy project is a multinational and multilevel attempt to look at problems of knowledge and governance across different countries and in local, national and international domains. The research is organized around three main areas – mapping knowledge potential available to decision-makers, analyzing decision-making processes, and focusing on the growing use of regulatory instruments involved in the production and dissemination of information.

For more information, please contact MHE Director Mary Van Dievel, at mvandievel@mhe-sme.org

Police and NGOs engage in dialogue at Daphne project meeting

As every fifth woman in Europe has been a victim of intimate partner violence, there is no doubt that domestic abuse should be high on the European agenda. Therefore, Mental Health Europe has embarked on an unique attempt to raise awareness of the problems involved in dealing with victims of domestic violence, and above all, to improve the ability of the police to perceive and respond to the victims' needs.

Train, Improve, Reduce. Diminish the mental health and psychological consequences of violence against women by dismantling prejudices of law enforcement agents,

MHE's project funded through the Daphne programme, held its second partners meeting on September 20-21. As well as hosting the project partners, which came from six European countries, Mental Health Europe also welcomed speakers from the Federal and Local Belgium Police, Prof. Myriam Van Moffaert from University of Ghent, Maude Luherne from AGE Platform Europe, Eve Geddie from PICUM and Pierrette Pape from European Women's Lobby.

The presentations, which focused on the mental health aspects of domestic violence, its European dimension and police response, also addressed the particular aspects associated with intimate partner violence in vulnerable groups.

On the second day of the meeting, the project partners agreed on the methodology for the training sessions that will be organized for police officers between January and May 2012.

Previous to the meeting, the project's Advisory Committee was established, and will include European Women's Lobby, Age Platform, PICUM, European Disability Forum, and the European Institute for Women's Health.

This is the second project MHE is carrying out in the area of violence against women. The project outcomes will include training sessions for police officers in the participating countries, along with a handbook which will showcase examples of good practices. Moreover, MHE and its partners will develop policy recommendations, which, together with the project outcomes, will be presented at the final conference in the autumn of 2012.

For more information on the project, please contact MHE Daphne Project Coordinator Karina Huberman at karina.huberman@mhe-sme.org or check <http://trainimprovereducer.wordpress.com/>

World Mental Health Day

*Mental Health Europe would like to inform members that the theme for the **2011 World Mental Health Day**, which will be celebrated on October 10, is "The Great Push: Investing in Mental Health." MHE would also like to invite members to inform us about their planned activities for World Mental Health Day and to send us a brief report after the events.*

World Mental Health Day in Baden-Württemberg, Germany

The Association for Social Psychiatry in Baden-Württemberg, Germany is set to organize different events on the occasion of the World Mental Health Day (WMHD). The events will take place in Böblingen, Heidelberg, Heidenheim, Ludwigsburg and Stuttgart and deal with themes such as depression, prevention of mental health problems, combating stigma, and the influence of schizophrenia on the working life, all under the patronage of the Baden-Württemberg ministry of labour, social affairs, family, women and older people. Mental health problems have been increasing in the last years in Germany, reaching alarmingly high figures. Moreover, mental health problems are one of the most frequent reasons for receiving work-incapacity and invalidity pensions.

To learn more about the events in Baden-Württemberg, please contact Mrs. Inge Schöck at info@gemeindepsychiatrie-bw.de

France – World Mental Health Day celebrated with public debate

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of World Mental Health Day, several French NGOs, under the patronage of the State Secretary on Solidarity and Social Cohesion opened a public debate on the way mental illness is represented and perceived in society. The debate was meant to dismantle prejudice against people with mental health problems, as the latter are often depicted as violent and dangerous. Users, policy-makers, journalists and mental health professionals will prompt discussions through testimonies, ideas and different perspectives, all shared in an attempt to reinforce the dignity of (ex-) users of mental health services.

UPDATE ON NEW ITEMS ON MHE WEBSITE

The MHE website has been updated with new information in the following sections:

- Home page - The description of our 2012 Conference in Split, Croatia is now on the front page of our website, while on the right side you can find the poster of the said conference

MHE REPRESENTATION AT VARIOUS MEETINGS

On September 1, MHE Director Mary Van Dievel took part in a meeting of the Social Platform Steering Group, which took place in Brussels.

On September 1-2, MHE Director Mary Van Dievel participated in a seminar organized by the WHO Collaborating Centre on "Formulation, dissemination and implementation of policies and practices in mental health in Europe: what do we need to know?" in Lille.

On September 6, MHE Human Rights Officer Gabor Petri participated in a meeting of the European Expert Group on Deinstitutionalization, which took place in Brussels.

On September 8, MHE Social Policy Officer Astrid Mechel participated in the Youth Volunteering Convention Stakeholder Conference, organized by the European Youth Forum in Brussels.

On September 12, MHE Director Mary Van Dievel, MHE Human Rights Officer Gabor Petri and MHE Social Policy Officer Astrid Mechel took part in a meeting with Croatian NGO MoSt at MHE's office, in Brussels.

On September 13, MHE Social Policy Officer Astrid Mechel participated in the stakeholder meeting for the preparation of the first Poverty Convention, organized by the European Commission in Brussels.

On September 14, MHE Social Policy Officer Astrid Mechel took part in the European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity 2012 Coalition Meeting, organized by the AGE Platform Europe in Brussels.

On September 14, MHE Daphne Project Coordinator Karina Huberman attended the 11th International Women and Health Meeting in Brussels.

On September 14, MHE Human Rights Officer Gabor Petri and MHE Director Mary Van Dievel took part in a meeting on mental health and wellbeing with DG Sanco and government experts, which took place in Luxembourg.

On September 16, MHE Director Mary Van Dievel took part in the MHE Executive Committee meeting, talking place in Brussels.

On September 19-20 MHE Daphne Project Coordinator Karina Huberman participated in the European Commission Conference "Equality between women and men," which took place in Brussels.

On September 20-21, MHE Director Mary Van Dievel and MHE Daphne Project Coordinator Karina Huberman organized the 2nd Partners meeting of the Project Train, Improve, Reduce, which took place in Brussels.

On September 21, MHE Social Policy Officer Astrid Mechel participated in a workshop on "Launching 2012: Regions for Active Ageing," organized by the Liaison agency Flanders-Europe and the Social Inclusion Regional Group (SIRG) in Brussels.

On September 21, MHE Director Mary Van Dievel participated in the launch of the European Social Network report on mental health at the European Parliament, in Brussels.

On September 21, MHE Network Development Officer Yves Brand participated in The Missing Link Final Conference, organized at the Flemish Parliament, in Brussels.

On September 22, MHE Daphne Project Coordinator Karina Huberman participated in the Social Platform FRAND working group training on hate and bias-motivated violence, which took place in Brussels.

On September 22, MHE Human Rights Officer Gabor Petri participated in the Social Platform Fundamental Rights working group, in Brussels.

On September 23, MHE Human Rights Officer Gabor Petri took part in roundtable discussion for NGOs about the EU Fundamental Rights Charter, organized in Brussels.

On September 23, MHE Social Policy Officer Astrid Mechel took part in the a conference addressing "The social impact of the crisis," organized by the European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN) in Brussels.

On September 28, MHE Information and Communications Officer Silvana Enculescu and MHE Human Rights Officer Gabor Petri participated in a European Ombudsman event on the occasion of the International Right To Know Day, which took place at the European Parliament, in Brussels.

On September 29, MHE Social Policy Officer Astrid Mechel participated in the European Year of Volunteering 2011 Alliance Meeting, organized by the European Volunteer Center (CEV) in Brussels.

On September 29, MHE Director Mary Van Dievel took part in the European Disability Forum consultation meeting with ENGOs, which took place in Brussels.

On September 29-30, Josée Van Remoortel, MHE Senior Policy Adviser, gave a presentation during the Annual conference of the German Dachverband Gemeindepsychiatrie on "Ambulant instead of stationary – community-based psychiatry shapes the future," organized in Leipzig.

NEWS FROM MHE MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

ŠENT develops projects for accessible tourism

In a bid to guarantee accessible tourism for all, MHE member ŠENT - Slovenian Association for Mental Health has embarked on two very ambitious projects. **Improving accessibility trough training in tourism – ITTI** and **Travel agency for people with special needs - TURAG4ALL** aim to provide tourism services tailored to the needs of disabled people.

The main aim of the ITTI, a project financed by Lifelong Learning Program Leonardo da Vinci, is to train tourism employees on working with disabled and elderly guests, thus increasing the competitiveness of tourism facilities. As employees in the tourism industry often lack the knowledge and skills crucial to effectively catering to guests with special needs, the project will increase awareness on the many facets of disability. ŠENT believes informed, educated and trained workers can greatly contribute to the inclusion of people with disabilities in tourism and in society at large.

Through the project TURAG4ALL, ŠENT and its partners established the first Slovenian travel agency for accessible tourism called PREMIKI (www.premiki.com). The agency is specialized in providing tourist services, products and information to people with special needs, their families

and friends. By managing supply and demand, ŠENT created a disabled-friendly network of tourist providers. Their offers include holidays, short breaks, sightseeing, thematic trips and other services. At the same time, ŠENT has an equally important goal - providing job opportunities for people who are disadvantaged on the labour market. As part of the project, a six-month training was organized for ten representatives of the above mentioned group, three of which already working at the agency for the past nine months. The project is partly supported by the European Social Fund.

All results and good practices stemming from the two projects are combined at the institute PREMIKI, founded by ŠENT. The institute offers services such as counselling, promotion and development in the field of accessible tourism in Slovenia.

II. EU INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER BODIES

Summary report on future of PROGRESS programme

The European Commission has released its report on the public consultation on a possible successor instrument to the EU programme for employment and social solidarity (PROGRESS), the programme under which Mental Health Europe receives its core funding. One hundred and seventy-one responses were received from respondents including public authorities, social partners and civil society organisations. Respondents pointed out how important the support and involvement of EU level civil society organisations, enabled by the PROGRESS programme, is. PROGRESS is seen as a complementary instrument to the European Social Fund (ESF), which respondents regard as mostly nationally-focused. Many comments were received about how a future EU financial instrument for employment and social affairs could coexist with the ESF. It was proposed by several respondents that the instrument could initiate projects that connect with ESF projects, either by feeding into them or by building on their results. Also, the benefits of networking and partnerships to enable mutual learning across the EU are pointed out by several respondents. The Commission will be presenting a legislative proposal for a new instrument as part of new Multiannual Financial Framework for the period 2014-2020. The proposal is expected to be adopted by the Commission by the end of 2011.

Mental Health Europe has also contributed to the consultation, pointing out how important the succession of the PROGRESS programme is in order to ensure that the voices of the most vulnerable, such as people with mental health problems, are brought forward to policy-makers and the public at large.

To access the full document, go to:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=699&langId=en&consultId=6&visib=0&furtherConsult=yes>

Call for Proposals for Social Experimentation

In the frame of the PROGRESS programme, the EU's employment and social solidarity programme, a new call for proposals was launched to support projects in the area of social experimentation. The objective of the Call is to select projects that contribute to developing and testing socially innovative approaches to policy priorities in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the Open Method of Coordination on social protection and social inclusion.

To be selected under this call, projects should focus on either

- Social inclusion of vulnerable groups, such as Roma people, migrants and their descendants, homeless and young people
- Quality of childcare services tackling child well-being, but also gender equality, poverty in jobless households, employment rates, birth rates and on long term sustainable

- development by supporting the development of human potential
- Active and healthy ageing targeting life habits, working conditions or urban policies with the aim to extend working lives and to reduce social protection expenditures
- Transition from education to work for the youth as a multidimensional policy approach combining actions on the education framework, the labour market and families

The application has to be handed in by a public authority (national, regional or local). The public authority has to involve at least one other category of partners including civil society organizations (NGOs, social enterprises, social partners etc), private or academic partners. Therefore, interested MHE member organisations are invited to make enquiries at their relevant authorities if they would like to get involved in the Call. Eligible to apply are the PROGRESS participating countries in the EU-27, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Serbia.

Funding will be provided for 3-5 major social experimentations running for a period for 18-24 months. The budget available for the Call is 3.5 million Euros. A co-financing rate of 20 % will be required.

The deadline for the submission of applications is 15 December 2011.

To access the Call for Proposals, go to:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=630&langId=en&callId=331&furtherCalls=yes>

Better regulated European money can help creating community services

The European Commission will come out with the first draft of the regulation on Structural Funds (2014-2020) in early October. As Structural Funds are still used in some countries on refurbishing residential institutions instead of promoting deinstitutionalization, the European Expert Group on Deinstitutionalization has started developing common European guidelines that will help governments use Structural Funds to develop community-based services.

The Structural Funds are the most important financial instrument in the social sector, making up 35% of the EU budget.

New report shows the problematic situation of mental health problems in European men

A new Men's Health Report, published by the European Commission at the end of August 2011, highlights the state of men's health in Europe as a serious public health concern. The presented data taken from 34 European countries showed severe differences in mental health outcomes amongst men both between and within countries.

The report highlighted that mental health problems, specifically depression and suicide, are under-diagnosed and under-treated in European men. Many men seem to find it challenging to seek help when it comes to mental health problems. It may also be difficult for health professionals themselves to identify changes in health behavior as signs of mental disturbances.

The report stated that in all countries men report better on mental well-being than women. However, although more women suffer from depressions and anxiety, men commit suicide more often and show a higher level of substance abuse and antisocial disorders. Furthermore the report showed that men suffer more frequently from work-related stress, compared to women. Finally, the level of mental stress symptoms such as overall fatigue and irritability are also slightly higher in men.

The European countries with the highest incidence of mental health problems in men were Greece (55%), Slovenia, Sweden and Latvia (38%), whereas the lowest figures were found in the UK, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands (15%).

More information on the report is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/population_groups/docs/men_health_report_en.pdf

New brochure on how to promote active ageing in Europe

The Committee of the Regions, AGE Platform Europe and the European Commission have issued a brochure presenting EU funding possibilities for regional and local initiatives that promote active ageing and solidarity between generations. The brochure is a contribution to the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012. Although there will be no budget be allocated to the EY 2012 directly, the brochure shows what resources are available at EU level in general and includes short presentations of the most relevant EU funding programmes to support new active ageing projects. Partnerships involving several countries are the most likely to receive funding. The brochure shows some examples of successfully funded projects in the field of active ageing.

To download the brochure, go to:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/ey2012main.jsp?langId=en&catId=970&newsId=1065&furtherNews=yes>

UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Considers Report Of Spain

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has considered the initial report of Spain on its implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The report of Spain is the second report to be reviewed by the Committee under the Convention.

For more information, go to

<http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=11404&LangID=E>

News from European Countries

France - Nobody should live on the street, French NGOs told government

The United Associations Collective, a network of 33 French organization working against discrimination in the field of housing and accommodation published a paper challenging the government to face the enduring drama of hundreds of thousands of people forced to live on the streets or in unacceptable housing conditions. The associations are calling for strong action in this area and denouncing the lack of ambition of government regarding emergency situations. Despite the association's repeated calls, more and more people are now vulnerable, and could become homeless to either the economic crisis, evictions from slums or squats without offering alternative solutions. These measures disproportionately affected the most vulnerable people - single persons, or single parents, the working poor, the elderly, migrants, or people suffering from physical, disabilities or mental health problems.

Therefore, the organizations asked the government to make sure that no one has to suffer the stress of living on the streets. The state should therefore ensure unconditional acceptance in housing facilities, and guarantee the access and retention of adequate housing for vulnerable people. The organizations also advocated for comprehensive health and social services for

people in need. Moreover, they advocated for including users of social housing in policy-making and decision-making processes.

Scotland - SMHAFF FESTIVAL LEARNING PROGRAMME

Now a regular on the arts scene, the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival has grown to become one of Scotland's most valued cultural events. The Festival takes place in theatres, cinemas, libraries and community halls throughout October each year to help challenge attitudes towards mental health through the arts.

It is now one of the largest arts and health events in the world with tens of thousands of attendees expected at almost 300 events taking place between October 1-24. This year it will provide 10 provocative and entertaining learning events taking mental health and memory as their starting point.

The venues will include The Citizens Theatre, Kelvingrove, CCA and Filmhouse, and contributors will include activists and community groups such as Oor, Mad History and Voices of Experience. Celebrities such as Elaine C Smith, former and current Chief Medical Officers Kenneth Calman and Harry Burns will support the Festival.

More information about the festival and programme is available at:
<http://www.mhfestival.com/>

News from other ENGOS

European Social Network launches mental health report

On September 21, the European Social Network published its mental health report, "**Mental health and Wellbeing in Europe – A person-centered community approach**" in an event at the European Parliament. The report highlights the fact that mental health problems have a serious impact on individuals, families and the society at large. Moreover, it pointed out that stigma is an important barrier to effective treatment, social inclusion, and ultimately quality of life. Therefore, ESN argued that strategies to tackle stigma should be pursued alongside the development of person-centered mental health services focused on a person's recovery.

During the EP event, organized with the support of MEP Nessa Childers, the discussion focused on the actions that should be carried out for promoting mental health and well-being within the Europe 2020 Strategy. Participants highlighted the need for developing a common framework for the development of mental health policies in the next nine years, and stressed the link between investing in personalized mental health services and achieving the Europe 2020 targets.

For more information, visit <http://esn-eu.org/>

Save the vote! – support the campaign for the voting rights of people with mental health problems

Voting rights are still restricted from people with mental health problems in many European countries. Mental Disability Advocacy Center (Budapest, Hungary) and a wide coalition of European organizations – including Mental Health Europe – have launched a campaign in order to influence the decision of the Venice Commission. In October 2011 the Venice Commission, a

consultation body of the Council of Europe, will issue an „interpretative declaration“ to the code of good practice in Electoral Matters on the participation of people with disabilities.

The present proposal of the Venice Commission would allow restriction from voting rights on the basis of „proven mental disability“. NGOs think that this proposal is harmful, and goes against international human rights treaties. Learn more about the campaign and join at <http://savethevote.info>.

“Ending Homelessness” handbook

FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless has published a toolkit titled “Ending Homelessness: A Handbook for Policy Makers” highlighting examples of successful approaches from across Europe that have made progress towards ending homelessness.

The handbook is available in English, French, Italian, Polish and Slovenian at:

http://www.feantsa.org/files/freshstart/Campaign_2010/background_docs/FEANTSA_handbook_EN_FINAL.pdf

EAPN Conference on the social impact of the crisis

On September 23, the European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN) organized a conference on “Getting out of the crisis together – Alternative approaches for an alternative recovery”. Following presentations from people experiencing poverty and high-level speakers from the European Commission, Parliament and the Social Protection Committee, several workshops were organized containing case studies from 12 EU countries as well as thematic workshops, for example on the creation of quality employment and an alternative use of cohesion policy as a solution.

In the frame of the conference, EAPN presented its new report on the social impact of the crisis and recovery policies in 2010. The reports reveals alarming facts, austerity measures undermining a sustainable recovery, with devastating consequences for the poor including cuts in social protection, social and health care provision, disability benefits etc. Considerable effects on the mental health of the people living in poverty are one of the negative consequences.

To access the report, go to:

http://www.eapn.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2283%253Ais-the-european-project-moving-backwards&catid=42%253Aeapn-position-papers-and-reports&Itemid=82&lang=en

Users’ conference draws attention to need for alternatives to psychiatry

“Searching For A Rose Guardian,” the conference organized by the Berlin Association for Protection Against Psychiatric Violence and attended by more than 200 delegates, offered invaluable pointers on alternatives to traditional psychiatry. As one of the speakers, Prof. Peter Beresford from Brunel University in London, remarked: “What made the conference special, were the positives to be learned. In the midst of psychiatric approaches that seemed determinedly to ignore the evidence of people’s lives and experience, we heard about pioneering and effective understandings from survivors which could and were making a difference and which could be the basis for effective new ways of making sense of and addressing madness and distress.”

More info about the event is available at: <http://www.weglaufhaus.de/kongress/en/>

The Missing Link holds final conference

On Wednesday, September 21 The Missing Link project had its final conference at the Flemish Parliament in Brussels, Belgium. The project links six organizations (The Link, Fokus, IGPB, Moinho, GIP, Fontys) that are committed to combating social exclusion. These organizations work with people who have migrated, experienced mental problems or poverty, training them trained to become experts and work in several sectors of society. The aim of the project is to examine how engaging experienced experts can improve the social inclusion of the most vulnerable people.

The final conference was opened by the Vice Minister President, Minister of innovation, Media and Coordinating Minister of Poverty, Mrs. Ingrid Lieten. Furthermore, the European Commissioner of Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Mr. Laszlo Andor gave a presentation and reflection on the Missing Link project.

One of the most moving and essential aspects of this conference was the broadcasting of a movie made by Fabio Wuytack, in which project participants shared their experiences and views on mental health issues, poverty and migration, as well as on how the project supported them in getting their lives on track.

More information about the movie, outcomes and developments can be found here:

<http://www.themissinglinkeurope.eu/>

III. EUROPEAN YEAR OF VOLUNTEERING 2011

The year 2011 has been proclaimed as the European Year of Volunteering. The aim of the European Year 2011 of Volunteering (EYV 2011) is to increase the popularity of volunteering and raise awareness of its societal value in the European Union. Activities for the EYV 2011 include awareness-raising initiatives such as conferences and seminars for the exchange of best practices.

As a member of the NGO Alliance for the European Year 2011 on Volunteering (EYV 2011), Mental Health Europe will pursue common activities with the Alliance and put emphasis on the dimension of volunteering for and by people with mental health problems.

EY 2011 website: <http://europa.eu/volunteering>

Website of the European Year 2011 of Volunteering NGO Alliance: <http://www.eyv2011.eu>

For information on MHE's work on volunteering and social inclusion, please contact Astrid Mechel, MHE Social Policy Officer, at astrid.mechel@mhe-sme.org

European Commission Communication on Volunteering

The European Commission has published a Communication on 20 September 2011 on "EU Policies and Volunteering: Recognising and Promoting Crossborder Voluntary Activities in the EU". The Communication recognizes volunteering is a creator of human and social capital, a pathway to integration and employment and as a key factor for improving social cohesion. Volunteers help shape European society and volunteers who work abroad actively contribute to building a "Europe of the Citizens". The Communication also recognizes that volunteering complements many European Union policy areas such as lifelong learning, rural development and sport. The European Commission plans to further improve the recognition and promotion of volunteering in the EU beyond the European Year of Volunteering 2011. The Commission's Communication proposes several measures to foster voluntary activities in the EU, including the creation of a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps and the development of a "European Skills Passport".

To read the full text of the Communication, go to: http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/redirecting/pdf/news/20110920_en.pdf

Youth Volunteering Conference in Brussels

In the frame of the Youth Convention on Volunteering, a Stakeholder Conference on "The Rights of the Volunteer" took place on September 7-8. Volunteer organisations, researchers, young volunteers and decision-makers developed a Declaration on the Right of the Volunteer, recognising the need for a European Charter on the Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers. The Charter was presented during the conference where Isabelle Durant, Vice-President of the European Parliament, expressed her support for the initiative. Apart from the conference, a "Volunteering Village" was set up around the European Parliament and more than 100 activities such as free concerts, workshops and debates were organized to raise the awareness about the importance of the contribution of young volunteers and volunteering organizations.

EYV 2011 Alliance is collecting 1 Million hours of volunteering

The EYV 2011 Alliance would like to promote the important contribution of volunteers across Europe. If you are a volunteer yourself, the Alliance invites you to sign up at the Alliance's website and register your volunteering hours of the year 2011. You can also use the "tell a friend" feature, to invite others to enter their volunteering hours, or to propose them to engage as volunteers themselves. To make the commitments, complete the online form; afterwards you will have the opportunity to print a 1-page-commitment thanking you personally for the hours you have committed to volunteer.

So far almost 300,000 hours have been collected. Support the EYV 2011 Alliance to achieve their set target of 1 million registered hours for 2011 and enter your volunteering commitments here:

http://www.eyv2011.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=81

Croatian NGO champions volunteering

MoSt, a non-profit organization from Split, Croatia, has been championing voluntary work since their creation in 1995. Their programs span all age groups and involve a large number of young volunteers.

POP-program, one of their main projects, offers psychosocial support for young people with behavioral problems in a non-institutional setting. Volunteers, mostly highschool and university students aged 17-27, work with children from socially endangered families or young people who committed a felony for the first time.

Another MoSt programs involves running a shelter for homeless people, open every day from 8 pm to 8 am. During the past 10 years, MoSt took care of more than 600 homeless people and a large number of socially endangered citizens who requested their help.

Moreover, every year in December MoSt collected food and sanitation products from thousands of students from elementary and secondary schools in Split. Those products were gathered in social supermarkets, where people living in poverty could choose the products they needed. Such actions contributed to raising awareness among the public of the plight of poverty and to preventing homelessness and promoting reintegration into society.

For more information, please contact Amalija Hrepic at amalija@most.hr or check www.most.hr

IV. CONFERENCES AND TRAININGS

The 5 Continents Congress – “The psychosocial Effects of Globalization on mental health.” Lyon, France. October 19-22, 2011

Children’s Rights for all Final conference – “Monitoring the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child for children with intellectual disabilities.” Brussems, Belgium. October 20,21, 2011.

20th European Social Services Conference – “Shaping the future for sustainable social services: Quality, Performance, innovation” Copenhagen, Denmark. June 25-27, 2012

Do you wish to share information, announce something or make a contribution to the MHE Newsletter?

Please send your contributions to info@mhe-sme.org