



MENTAL HEALTH EUROPE – SANTE MENTALE EUROPE aisbl  
Boulevard Clovis 7, B-1000 Brussels  
Tel +32 2 280 04 68 - Fax +32 2 280 16 04  
E-Mail: [info@mhe-sme.org](mailto:info@mhe-sme.org)  
[www.mhe-sme.org](http://www.mhe-sme.org)

Brussels, August 4, 2011

## UN sheds light on forgotten Europeans

In an attempt to stimulate discussion on the need for governments to develop community based alternatives to institutional care, the United Nations (UN) Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights issued an important account of the human rights standards relevant to people with disabilities. Mental Health Europe (MHE) thoroughly welcomes the **“Forgotten Europeans, Forgotten Rights”** report, which is undoubtedly a useful tool for both lobbyists and policy-makers.

Unfortunately, the UN report once again highlights the discrimination of people with mental health problems, the most vulnerable group of disabled patients living in institutions. Very often, users of mental health services have their rights breached through involuntary admission and treatment, deprivation of legal capacity, and lack of diagnosis revision. Living conditions in institutions were also found to have severe shortcomings regarding acceptable living space, sleeping accommodation, hygiene, privacy and respect for property. Moreover, patients in residential institutions often experience physical and psychological abuse.

The report focuses on rights provided by the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), which is the latest and most advanced international human rights instrument in the disability field. The CRPD, along with the so-called “MI Principles,” a 1991 UN instrument, gives guidance and provides an opportunity for the civil society to monitor human rights in existing institutions. Nevertheless, the report emphasizes that the CRPD is far more than just a monitoring tool - it represents a paradigm shift in international human rights and gives a unique chance for people with mental health problems to influence legislation and policies, and to help replace institutions with community based services. Along with the writers of the report, Mental Health Europe agrees that all relevant and pre-CRPD human rights instruments must be substantially revised, especially the provisions concerning consent to treatment, guardianship and deprivation of liberty.

Mental Health Europe, with the support of the Open Society Institute Mental Health Initiative, is currently in the process of developing its own publication on deinstitutionalization, providing valuable insight on the state of institutional care in Europe, and the number of people living in institutions in each European country. This unique report is scheduled for the beginning of next year.

For more information, please contact Mental Health Europe, at [info@mhe-sme.org](mailto:info@mhe-sme.org) or +32 2 280 04 68

### **About Mental Health Europe**

Mental Health Europe (MHE) is an organisation committed to the promotion of positive mental health, the prevention of mental distress, the improvement of care, advocacy for social inclusion and the protection of human rights for people with mental health problems, their families and carers. MHE vision is of a Europe where mental health and well-being is given high priority in the political spectrum and on the European health and social agenda, where people with mental health problems live as full citizens with access to appropriate services and support when needed, and where meaningful participation is guaranteed at all levels of decision-making and administration. MHE's values are based on dignity and respect, equal opportunities, freedom of choice, anti-discrimination, social inclusion, democracy and participation.