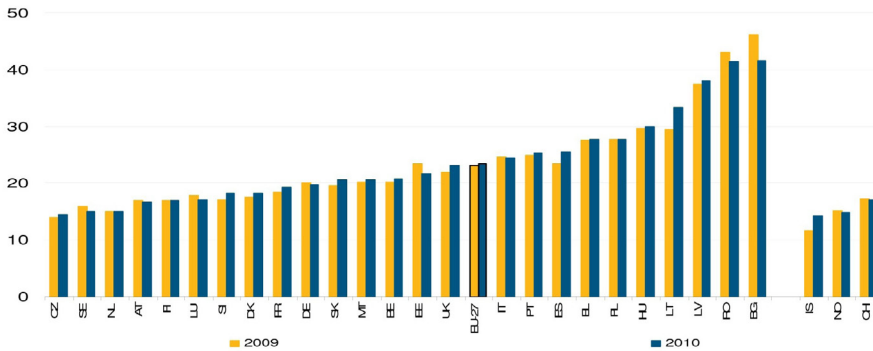


Mental Health Europe News and Policy Work

Figure 1: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion (%), 2009 and 2010



Note: EU-27 Eurostat estimation, data not available for IE and CY in 2010
Source: Eurostat (online data code : [ilc_peps01](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&plugin=1))



MHE issues press release calling for action on soaring poverty rates

The strength of a democracy can be judged by how much weight is placed on equality, solidarity and human rights in the policy process. Still, if we were to judge European Union (EU) Member States based on how the poorest and most vulnerable people are faring, especially during the financial crisis, the results would be disappointing at best. Therefore, on the World Day of Social Justice, Mental Health Europe (MHE) called on the EU Institutions and national governments to seriously engage with the European Platform Against Poverty (EPAP) – a flagship of the EUROPE 2020 strategy. Urgent and decisive action is required to aid the 23% of EU citizens who are at risk of poverty, of which 8% suffer from severe material deprivation. In times of economic downturn and austerity, short term economic goals must not over-shadow the

importance to build and safeguard inclusive societies. Otherwise Member States of the European Union will forsake Europe's biggest asset - its human capital. However, due to lack of knowledge, discrimination and stigma, the employment gap between people with mental health problems and average EU citizens is 10-15% in the case of mild or moderate mental health problems, and 30% for people who experience severe symptoms. Moreover, when (ex-) users of mental health services find employment, their average income is 10-40% lower than that of regular citizens, placing the former at a much higher risk of poverty. Therefore, MHE urged national governments and the European Union to ensure that the EPAP plays a strong role in safeguarding and delivering on the goal of lifting at least 20 million people from pov-

Editorial

Dear members,

The month of February was full of events. Among the most important was the MHE Board meeting, where a number of decisions were taken which will contribute to shaping the MHE policy work this year and beyond. One key decision was to focus our Youth (un)employment campaign, which runs from 2011-2013, on young people who face a first episode psychosis, which often leads to lifelong exclusion from the labor market unless appropriate early intervention is ensured. However, with adequate support, those persons can be prepared for the employment market with very high success rates. This scheme needs to be further promoted and developed and we hope that our project will contribute to this! On February 20, the International Day on Social Justice was celebrated. MHE grasped this opportunity to call on the EU Institutions and national governments to seriously engage with the European Platform Against Poverty – a flagship of the EUROPE 2020 strategy. Urgent and decisive action is required to aid the 23% of EU citizens who are at risk of poverty. Otherwise, Member States of the European Union will forsake Europe's biggest asset - its human capital. More about this and other important issues in this newsletter – enjoy the reading!

Maria Nyman
MHE Director

Let's socialize



Highlights

MHE issues press release calling for action on soaring poverty rates

Reminder - Call for abstracts for 2012 Conference

MHE takes part in EPAP dialogue

erty by 2020. This goal must be seen as equally important to the strategies' other objectives. Furthermore, member states should not disregard the social inclusion of the most vulnerable groups in striving to reach the level of 75% employment by 2020.

MHE also appealed to the EU Institutions to ensure that the new funding regulations for the 2014-2020 period are shaped in such a way as to reflect the poverty reduction goal and promote the European social model. MHE welcomed the introduction of earmarking 20% of the European Social Fund to combat poverty and promote social inclusion, and asks the Council and the European Parliament to retain it in the final regulation. Authorities at the EU, national and local levels should work with employers to combat prejudice and stigma related to people with mental health problems, and to allow people with mental health problems to access employment, should they wish to do so. Support to employers to ensure that reasonable accommodation and equal treatment at work are provided needs to be an integral part of any employment strategy.

"People with mental health problems should be offered support and guidance, tailored to their individual needs. The goal is always to increase the quality of living, and employment plays a big role in living a fulfilled, autonomous life," said Nace Kovac, MHE President. "There is no one-size-fits-all approach," he added.

Reminder - Call for abstracts for 2012 Conference

Mental Health Europe would like to remind all interested that the deadline for submitting abstracts for our 2012 Conference, which will engage with the social determinants of mental health, is March 15. The conference will bring together experts from the European Commission, the WHO and the United Nations to present differ-

ent methods for improving the social environment in schools and workplaces, encouraging inclusion within the community, and developing strong and supportive networks which can have a positive impact on mental health. Grass roots experts will also contribute with examples of good practices found throughout Europe.

MHE welcomes abstract submissions for the following parallel sessions:

- Meeting the basic needs of children and youth as an investment in the future
- Changing the attitude of employers towards people with mental health problems
- A framework for the establishment of strong and supportive networks
- The role of volunteering in establishing networks in rural and remote areas
- The human rights aspect of the access to quality community-based services
- Deinstitutionalisation and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- The role of the media in changing people's attitudes towards mental health issues
- Solidarity between generations in the mental health field – Round Table debate

To submit an abstract, of 400 words at most, please complete [this form](#) (hyperlinked) and send it to Yves Brand at yves.brand@mhe-sme.org and Maja Soco at maja.soco@stokoluri.org

MHE takes part in EPAP dialogue

MHE Director Maria Nyman and MHE Social Policy Officer Paulina Banas participated in the 3rd Stakeholder dialogue of the European Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion (EPAP) on the February 6, 2012.

This was the 3rd meeting between the European Commission (EC)

Upcoming events

Seminar 'Putting Equality in the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020.' March 7. Brussels, Belgium

To register, go to <http://www.lgbt-ep.eu/badge/>

Conference "European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing: From Plan to Action." April 3. Brussels, Belgium.

For more information, please go to http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/ct/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=7855

and European level NGOs, International Organisations and social partners to discuss the role of the EPAP and the Annual Convention on Poverty and Social Exclusion in delivering the EUROPE 2020 goals, especially the goal of lifting at least 20 million people out of poverty by 2020. The forthcoming Cyprus Presidency was also represented, considering that the Annual Convention will be organised during their Presidency.

During the keynote speech Lieve Fransen, who has recently taken over the responsibility for delivering on the social agenda of the EUROPE 2020, outlined her vision for the EPAP for the years to come. She emphasized the need for being results oriented –in her view EPAP should be a platform that demonstrates results of specific measures rather than sharing information on processes and ideas for projects. She envisages the EPAP to centre on the premise that leaving people in poverty means leaving behind Europe's biggest resource – its human capital.

The focus of the EPAP in 2012 will be Active Inclusion and Child Poverty. MHE has already contributed to the 2007 Consultation on Active Inclusion. Following the meeting, MHE has already shared the our 2011 position paper "In times of crisis, the future is at stake" with the key policy-makers in the European Commission. MHE will be present at the Annual Convention on Poverty that will take place on December 5-7, 2012 in Brussels.

MHE Senior Policy Advisor gives thoughts on psychotherapy

On February 9, MHE Director Maria Nyman and MHE Senior Policy Adviser Stijn Jannes attended the Conference "Psychotherapy in Europe – Putting the record straight" hosted by MEP Nessa Childers at the European Parliament. The conference discussed the effectiveness of psychotherapy versus medication for the treatment of depression, with contributions from both mental health specialists and European Union (EU) policy-makers.

All speakers agreed that great efforts must be made to ensure the evidence-based treatment of mental disorders. However, while there has been overwhelming research showing that psychotherapy is the most effective means for treating mild and moderate depressions, psychiatric drugs dominate as a form of treatment. However, medication or a combination of medication and psychotherapy is more effective for severe depressions.

Stijn Jannes also participated in the panel discussion where he made a short statement. Jannes mentioned that hospitalization and separation from family, society and work must be limited and carefully thought over from the therapeutic point of view. The need of the person should prevail over the comfort of the professionals. Moreover, all intervention steps must be used in a well-adjusted and co-ordinate way, depending on the individual and the stage of the depression.

For more information, go to <http://www.npce.eu/index.html>

MHE appoints new Social Policy Officer

MHE has appointed a new social policy officer. Paulina Banas will work on the European social agenda continuing the invaluable

work carried out by Astrid Mechel for the last three years.

Paulina has gained experience in policy and advocacy in the fields of social and migration policies working for two European level NGOs. She also worked for 6 years in the UK in the social care sector supporting people with disabilities in the community. She started in a role of a care assistant and progressed through the ranks of the organisation to the level of supervisor, where she was in charge of teams of support workers. Paulina was also a recipient of the London Best Home Care Worker award 2008 by CERETAS (a home care services association UK).

Paulina holds a BSc in Cognitive Science-Psychology from the University of Westminster in London. She also studied Public Policy and Human Development at Maas-

Website updates

MHE Press Releases - Our press release on the World Day of Social Justice is available at http://www.mhe-sme.org/news-and-events/mhe-press-releases/social_justice.html

Reports - all four previous sections dealing with MHE Reports have been compiled into one tab. <http://www.mhe-sme.org/publications/reports.html>

tricht University at a Master's level. She is currently finalising her thesis that focuses on the employment of people with disabilities in her home country Poland.

The MHE team wishes Paulina best of luck in her new position. At the same time our warmest wishes go out to Astrid for her new role at the European Commission.

EU Institutions and other bodies

European Parliament may use unspent ESF grants for tackling youth unemployment

Members of the European Parliament are discussing a European Commission (EC) proposal to use unspent European Structural Funds (ESF) grants for reducing youth unemployment by creating jobs and adapting programmes in countries where youth unemployment rates are increasing rapidly.

According to the EC, at the end of 2011 Member States still had 30 billion in ESF programmes which had not yet been committed to actual activities. Thus, ESF reflows could be used to finance apprenticeship/traineeship programmes or to promote entrepreneurship among young people.

Although different groups in the European Parliament supported the idea, they still had concerns regarding the practical implementation of the ESF for these programmes, as they wanted to make sure that the funds would not be used to support the administrative

capacity of Member States rather than tackling youth unemployment. MHE welcomes the European Commission using unspent ESF funds to decrease youth unemployment, but would like to see a specific focus on integrating young people with mental health problems in the job market.

News from other ENGOS

ENUSP: Czech Republic must stop using cagebeds

Following the horrific news about the suicide of a woman kept in a caged bed, the European Network of (ex)Users and Survivors of Psychiatry (ENUSP) issued a press release asking the Czech Government to take appropriate measures in order to prevent users of psychiatry from any form of torture and degrading treatment. According to reports in the Czech press, the 51-year-old woman hanged herself in the cage on the morning of January 20, 2012. She had been locked inside hours earlier after being

reported “restless.” Moreover, according to ENUSP research, at least five other people have met “unexpected, unnatural and violent” deaths while being restrained in cages in Czech psychiatric wards in recent years.

ENUSP also urged the international community to take action by sending messages to the Czech Ministry of Health.

Mental Health Europe has already alerted the members of its Human Rights Committee about the case, and has prepared a letter supporting ENUSP, which will be sent to the Czech Ministry.

For more information, please contact ENUSP at enusp.info@gmail.com

ENIL organizes hearing on austerity measures

The European Network of Independent Living (ENIL), together with the European United Left / Nordic Green Left Parliamentary Group, organized a hearing in the European Parliament on February 9, to present evidence about the impact austerity measures are having on people with disabilities in the EU. Panels focused on topics such as disability and policy, deinstitutionalization and disability and the media, as well as addressing the threat of cuts to the rights of persons with disabilities at the European level.

NGOs present at the meeting called identified actions that can be taken by the European Commission and the European Parliament to address the current situation and ensure that the rights of people with disabilities in the EU are upheld. MHE was represented at the hearing by Human Rights Officer Gabor Petri.

Read the full report of the event here: <http://enil.eu/2012/02/spotlight-hearing-in-the-european-parliament-%E2%80%9Cdefend-the-right-of-independent-living-how-the-eu%E2%80%99s-austerity-policy-is-undermining-the-lives-of-people-with-disabilities-%E2%80%9D/>

European Disability Forum launches Freedom Guide

The European Commission is working on an Accessibility Act - a text which the European Disability Forum (EDF), the representative organization of 80 million citizens of the EU who live with disability, has long been lobbying for. To contribute to the accessibility debate, on February 29 EDF published The Freedom Guide, which provides an overview of the implications of the rights recognised by the European Union Treaties linked to free movement of persons, goods and services, for persons with disabilities. The Freedom Guide concretely aims to illustrate that freedom of movement is still not a reality for persons with disabilities. Moreover, it highlights that the internal market is still a place of exclusion due to the continued circulation of inaccessible goods and services. This must change, to ensure that all citizens can enjoy their human and civil rights. The UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) provides for an instrumental framework to establish a more inclusive society. MHE Senior Policy Adviser Josée Van Remoortel and several MHE members also contributed to the Guide, along with representatives of the European Network of (ex) Users and Survivors of Psychiatry. MHE was represented at the launch event on February 29 by Director Maria Nyman.

To read the guide, go to <http://cms.horus.be/files/99909/MediaArchive/library/Freedom%20Guide.pdf>

NGOs advise the European Court of Human Rights to let the UN Convention be the standard

European Disability Forum, together with the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and the World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry and European Network of (ex-)Users and Survivors of Psy-

chiatry (WNUSP) submitted a third-party intervention to the European Court of Human Rights against Latvia, concerning unlawful deprivation of liberty of a person with psychosocial disabilities. The three NGOs argued that the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, described by the European Court of Human Rights as “universal consensus on disability rights,” provides the new standard whereby deprivation of persons of legal capacity and their detention in closed psychiatric institutions is a violation of their human rights and freedoms.

MHE, as member of EDF, was also consulted before submitting the paper for the Court. The case is now pending at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

MHE supports Human Rights Commissioner in arguing for legal capacity

Thomas Hammarbers, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights believes that persons with intellectual and psycho-social disabilities are today routinely placed under a guardianship regime in several European countries, a policy which clearly violates human rights standards. Being recognised as someone who can make decisions is essential for everyone who seeks to take control over his/her life and participate in society on an equal basis with others, he said. The Commissioner argued that no exception should be made from the assumption that all adults of majority age have legal capacity. In a society respecting human rights also persons with intellectual and psycho-social disabilities must be included. The Commissioner also pointed out that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Article 12 (on the equal recognition before the law) signals a deeper understanding of equality: all persons with disabilities shall enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis with oth-

ers in all aspects of life and shall be provided with the support they may require in exercising their legal capacity. The support called for in Article 12 of the UN Convention can take a variety of forms: for instance, support to enable someone who communicates in alternative ways to convey messages to others, assistance in contacts with the authorities or help to define options for living and other arrangements.

For more information, go to http://commissioner.cws.coe.int/tiki-view_blog_post.php?postId=207

YoungMinds urges local governments to protect children and adolescents health care services budgets

YoungMinds, a UK children and young people's mental health charity, has written to every Council Leader in England urging them to protect Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services Budgets, stressing the importance of investment in early intervention services. This action by YoungMinds is aimed at preventing local governments in reducing budgets for

mental health services for children and adolescents. The local government budget-setting meetings are planned for the end of March and it is likely that services aimed at early intervention will face severe cuts. YoungMinds Director of Campaigns, Press and Participation Lucie Russell states that the benefits of early intervention are clear, both from a health perspective as well as for economic reasons. "By investing in cheaper early intervention services, governments can avoid much more expensive care when mental health problems becomes more entrenched," she said.

Do you wish to share information, make an announcement or contribute to the MHE Newsletter? Do you have thoughts on the content or the layout of our publication? We would love to hear from you!

Please send your opinions or contributions to silvana.enculescu@mhe-sme.org