

Mental Health Europe News and Policy Work



Mental Health Europe publishes press release calling on European leaders to step up the deinstitutionalization process

As we speak, 300,000 Europeans are locked up in psychiatric wards. Some literally, as the right to consent was stripped away from them due to their mental health problems, and others figuratively, as the lack of community-based services left them with no other options.

Moreover, closed psychiatric institutions have long been regarded by both researchers and by mental health service users as inefficient, outdated, and unable to adequately protect against human rights abuses and prevents from re-integration and inclusion in society. Tragedies such as that of a Czech woman killing herself after being forced into a caged bed happen all too often, and only very few of them are made public by the media.

Therefore, on the International Day for the Right to the Truth

Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims, Mental Health Europe called on European leaders to acknowledge that closed institutions cannot protect people from exploitation and abuse, to step up the deinstitutionalization process, and to offer viable alternatives for people with mental health problems to get support in the community. It is time for the inhuman, degrading, and sometimes torturous practices that are used behind closed doors in such institutions to be stopped, once and for all. Furthermore, persons with mental health problems should be empowered to take decisions regarding their treatment and accommodation, should enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis with others in all aspects of life, and should be provided with any support they may require in exercis-

Editorial

Dear readers,

March went very quickly, as it was full of the events, meetings and activities we have the pleasure of sharing with you in this issue. The training of our National Focal Points was the highlight of March. MHE had the pleasure of welcoming 30 representatives from National member organisations to Brussels, for two days of capacity-building, sharing experiences and preparing the six seminars which will take place this autumn in different European countries. A report on the training will be included in our next newsletter. MHE also took the opportunity to mark a couple of international days in March – the International Women's Day on March 8, where we called for commitment and funds to end domestic violence against women, and the newly declared UN Day for the Right to the Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims, on March 24. In our press release for this day, MHE called on European leaders to acknowledge that closed institutions cannot protect people from exploitation and abuse, to step up the deinstitutionalization process, and to offer viable alternatives for people with mental health problems to get support in the community.

Happy Easter and we wish you a beautiful spring period!

Maria Nyman, Director

Let's socialize



Highlights

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MHE discusses mental health impact of financial crisis in Public Service Review

Mental Health Europe sends letter to the Czech Government, asking for a ban on caged beds

ing their rights.

The first proposal on regulating the post-2013 period of Structural Funds came out in October 2011. The regulation will be responsible for setting the guidelines on how countries can use hundreds of billions of Euros in the next seven years. Therefore, it is crucial that during the negotiation process between EU institutions, Member States and civil society, policy makers make sure that European money is exclusively granted to projects aiming at developing community-based services, and not at refurbishing large residential institutions.

Moreover, European leaders need to remember that living free from torture and forced, inhuman treatment is a fundamental right for all, backed by the United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Article 19, and also by the Fundamental Rights Charter of the European Union, which emphasizes the right to live in the community in Article 26. Therefore, providing alternative care in the community is not a choice that Governments can make, it is their obligation under international law.

For more information, please contact MHE Information and Communications Officer Silvana Enculescu at silvana.enculescu@mhe-sme.org

MHE discusses mental health impact of financial crisis in Public Service Review

Mental Health Europe got featured in a two-page spread in the Public Service Review European issue, in an article highlighting why it is crucial that mental health be put high on the political agenda when handling the financial crisis.

MHE senior Policy Advisor José Van Remoortel stressed that the financial crisis threatened to reverse even the small progresses made regarding deinstitutionalisation and social inclusion. Blaming the credit crunch, governments tended to reduce the funds

allocated to community-based services, leaving more and more people without support. Reports from the UK showed that cutting services led to some families having to send family members to residential institutions, which have long been regarded by both researchers and by disabled people themselves as inefficient, outdated, and unable to protect against human rights abuses. She also pointed out that it is important for governments and European policymakers to understand that the rise in mental health problems in Europe is due as much to the crisis as to governments' response to it. Budget cuts, the reduction of allowances for families and disabled people, diminishing benefits and a decrease in the number of staff working in social services will only worsen this already dire situation, and harm the poorest and most vulnerable members of society.

To read the article, go to http://www.publicservice.co.uk/article.asp?publication=European+Union&id=556&content_name=Health+and+Social+Care&article=19330

To see the whole issue (MHE is featured on page 310), go to <http://edition.pagesuite-professional.co.uk/launch.aspx?referral=other&pnum&refresh=H1n5wK30T1y2&EID=364cc048-29d3-4b45-8e7c-b4c8f7c9cab0&skip>

Mental Health Europe sends letter to the Czech Government, asking for a ban on caged beds

Upon hearing the disturbing news of a Czech woman with mental health problems who hung herself after being placed in a caged bed, Mental Health Europe has written the Czech Minister of Health asking for a ban on caging. Mental Health Europe is thus supporting the European Network of (Ex-)Users and Survivors of Psychiatry, who first drew attention to this horrific abuse. Mental Health Europe has also called on the Czech Government to close down psychiatric hospitals and residen-

Upcoming events

EPHA Annual Conference 2012 "Restructuring health systems: how to promote health in times of austerity?" June 6. Brussels, Belgium. MHE Director Maria Nyman will deliver a presentation at this event

For more information, please contact Tereska Van Den Abeele

18th International NPNR Conference "Mental health nursing and research through the ages. Oxford, UK. September 26-27

For more information, please contact Laura Benfield at nprn@rcn.org.uk

tial institutions, and replace them with community-based services. Living free from torture and forced, inhuman treatment is a fundamental right for all, backed by international human rights treaties the Czech Republic has signed, The Czech Republic ratified the United Nations Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities in 2007, and must seriously work on its implementation. This tragic death is testimony to the need for further sustained efforts to implement this crucial human rights instrument. In line with the UN CRPD, Mental Health Europe once more urged the Czech Government to ban forced psychiatric procedures, including caged beds, forced medication, involuntary admission, physical restraint and seclusion in psychiatric hospitals in the Czech Republic.

On International Women's Day, MHE asked for commitment, legislation and funds

Domestic violence is all too often considered a private affair, one frequently kept secret within families. However, violence against women is a crime and a severe violation of fundamental rights, and recognised as such under International human rights instruments.

Therefore, on International Women's Day, Mental Health Europe is naming and shaming society's often passive approach to domes-

tic violence, hoping that battles once fought in the home will now be won in the meeting rooms of European Union (EU) institutions. The EU needs to commit to further allocating funds for projects on domestic violence, to finally shed light on this shameful practice and help the millions of women victims and survivors. Furthermore, Mental Health Europe reiterates its call for an EU strategy on violence against women and supports the demand by numerous organisations for a European Year to end violence against women in the near future. Despite common misconceptions, acts of domestic violence are neither scarce, not isolated, as recent statistics show that one in four European women experience domestic violence at some point in their lives. Moreover, domestic violence is often a gateway to even more serious crimes, as half of female murder victims are killed by family members, and 35% murdered by their spouses or ex-spouses. In Europe, seven women die every day from domestic violence perpetrated by men. Women with mental health problems are more likely to become victims of domestic violence, and victims of domestic violence are prone to post traumatic stress disorder, psychosis, depression and attempted suicide. In 2004, the cost of treating mental health problems due to domestic violence in the United Kingdom alone was £176 million.

Therefore, ensuring that specific funding will still be available for fighting domestic violence should be high on the European Commission's agenda. It is a crucial moment, as from 2014 on DAPHNE, which supports projects on violence against women, children and young people, will be incorporated into a "Rights and Citizenship Programme" currently holding no earmarked funding for projects aiming at combating violence against women. As violence against women has received more politi-

cal attention in recent years, we are starting to see an improvement in both women's access to support and in reporting cases of domestic violence. However, recent national statistics also show worrying trends, with the prevalence of domestic violence increasing in young people in Cyprus, and data from the UK proving that one in five young men believes domestic violence to be acceptable.

Intimate partner violence leaves lasting physical and psychological scars on the victims, and women need support to break the spiral of domestic abuse. Equally, society needs the courage to break the cycle of neglect and finally face up to a problem that currently shows no signs of going away.

For more information, please contact MHE Information and Communications Officer Silvana Enculescu at silvana.enculescu@mhe-sme.org

Register for the MHE 2012 Conference

There was hardly a time in recent European history when inequalities were more obvious than during this financial crisis. In housing, employment, and especially health, the crisis hit poor people the worst, with most budget cuts concentrating on social services. Therefore, Mental Health Europe (MHE), in collaboration with Sto Koluri Split, has decided to dedicate its 2012 Conference to engaging with the social determinants of mental health, in a bid to emphasize the role society plays in both reinforcing and addressing inequalities. The MHE conference, "From individual to collective responsibility – The social determinants of mental health," organized in Split, Croatia between June 14-16, 2012, will bring together experts from the European Commission, the WHO and the United Nations to present different methods for improving the social environment in schools and workplaces, encouraging inclusion within the community, and developing

Website updates

MHE Press Releases - Our press release on the International Day for the Right to the Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims is available at http://www.mhe-sme.org/news-and-events/mhe-press-releases/lifting_lockdown.html

Our press release on International Women's Day is available at http://www.mhe-sme.org/news-and-events/mhe-press-releases/international_womens_day_2012.html

MHE Front Page - The letter MHE sent to the Czech Minister of Health to ask for a ban on caging is available at <http://www.mhe-sme.org/assets/files/press/MHE%20letter%20to%20the%20Czech%20Government%20.pdf>
Our conference poster on the right side of the front page now links to the website of the MHE 2012 Conference, <http://mheconference2012.com/>

Our members - The section has been updated according to MHE's new statutes

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.

Moreover, a special satellite symposium for participants from Balkan and Eastern European countries will be held on Thursday, June 14, and will address "Post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) and their impact on 2nd and 3rd generations." Speakers will include psychiatrists, university professors and social workers helping people with PTSD rebuild their lives.

Unfair and avoidable – the terms used by the World Health Organization to describe the social determinants of health are both grim and hopeful. They underline the need to act on the conditions that so deeply impact the length and quality of people's lives, but they also offer hope that inequalities can indeed be tackled.

To be part of the change, register for the MHE conference at <http://mheconference2012.com/en/registration.html>

News from MHE Members

Swedish National Association for Mental Health starts campaign to prevent suicide

Suicide is one of the most common death causes in Sweden, as every year more than 1400 persons take their own lives. Moreover, for people aged 15-24, suicide is by far the most common cause of death, especially among young men.

To counter this, the Swedish National Association for Mental Health will, in the autumn of 2012, launch a webservice and a campaign to diminish the number of suicides in Sweden. It is a long term-project with the aim to mobilise a large number of stakeholders, in order to diminish the number of suicides by 50% by 2022.

The webservice, available at www.prataomlivet.se, will first and foremost target young people, aged 15-25. The campaign wishes to tackle the stigma attached to mental health problems, and support persons to feel that they can openly talk about their circumstances and feelings. The campaign will also include information and knowledge sharing through seminars, publishing reports and a yearly conference on the issue. Specialised volunteers will provide the service, and will receive continuous training by experts.

For more information, please contact Swedish National Association for Mental Health Secretary General Carl von Essen at carl.von.essen@psykiskhalsa.se

Fundacion INTRAS launches E-Learning platform for trainers and educators working with vulnerable people

MHE Spanish Member Fundacion INTRAS, in partnership with other European NGOs, has launched a project aimed at providing tools and resources based on the use of art in education, as well as supporting the exchange of knowledge and mutual cooperation among educators, therapists and

artists targeting people suffering from mental health problems and other adults at risk of social exclusion.

ARTERY is a Multilateral Grundtvig Project funded with support from the European Commission. It is meant to be a compilation of educational techniques and training scenarios that can be further used in implementing art-based workshops in any country. Furthermore, other organizations and individuals are invited to present their own materials and contribute to the exchange of knowledge.

For more information, please go to <http://arteryproject.eu/platform/>

Ozara develops project on domestic violence

MHE Slovenian member Ozara, along with a number of European researchers and NGOs, has

embarked on a project on training women victims of domestic violence, as well as mental health service providers, on the links between domestic violence and mental health. The project aims at empowering women affected by domestic violence to express negative feelings in a safe environment, teaching them coping behaviors, self management and use of mutual support networks through a series of interactive workshops. Moreover, it aims to encourage some of the women beneficiaries to become group facilitators. Another goal of the project is to training mental health providers on domestic violence issues and on how to work with women who have both mental health problems and who are experiencing domestic violence.

For more information, go to <http://www.empowerw.eu/index.php/the-project>

EU Institutions and other bodies

Deinstitutionalization expert professor Jim Mansell dies after a long illness

Professor Jim Mansell (Tizard Centre, University of Kent, England), who spent 40 years in the disability movement, has died after a long illness. He was leader of many research projects in the field of deinstitutionalization and leader of the so-called DECLOC study which provided the first comprehensive data on institutional care in Europe. He wrote several reports and gave a big number of interviews to the press highlighting the need to abandon the institution-based system for disabled people, including persons with mental health problems.

Call for papers on violence against people with disabilities

Violence against people with disabilities is an important public health and human rights concern. There is increasing attention to violence against people with dis-

abilities in the United Kingdom and other countries around the world, with increased media reporting on the topic and growing public awareness of hate crime. Additional research is required to better understand the issue.

In line with a public health approach to violence prevention, WHO has commissioned Liverpool John Moores University to produce systematic reviews of data on the prevalence and risk of violence against adults and children with disabilities. Published in *The Lancet*, the first of these reviews has indicated that adults with disabilities are at much greater risk of violence than adults without disabilities. In fact disabled adults are 1.5 times more likely to be a victim of violence than those without a disability, while those with mental health conditions are at nearly four times the risk of experiencing violence. The systematic review of violence against children will be published later this year. To inform and improve policy and practice in the field, further research is required to explore risk and protective fac-

tors and underlying causes for violence, as well as evidence for interventions which either help prevent violence against people with disabilities in the first place or improve outcomes for victims. In the context of the Disability Studies Association annual conference in Lancaster, United Kingdom, to be held from 11-13 September 2012, WHO will host a roundtable presenting the evidence from the systematic reviews, together with papers on risk and protective factors and on the evidence for the effectiveness of interventions. In this regard, WHO is issuing a call for papers based on empirical data, whether from quantitative or qualitative social research. Papers which discuss the situation in low-income or middle-income countries will be prioritized. If you are a researcher, policy-maker or practitioner working in this area, and you would like to present a paper on violence or interventions to prevent violence, please contact Tom Shakespeare (shakespeare@who.int). Two bursaries of £500 are available to support participation by researchers from low-income or middle-income countries. The deadline for expressions of interest and abstracts is 16 April 2012.

For further information about the Disability Studies Association annual conference, visit www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/events/disabilityconference/

Call for papers - Mental health nursing and research through the ages

This year the 18th International Network for Psychiatric Nursing Research (NPNR) Conference, which will take place in Oxford on September 26-27, explores two overlapping themes linked by the concept of time: Mental health nursing practice and research across the lifespan and historical and biographical approaches to mental health nursing research.

The NPNR conference will promote the exploration of the creative and constructive changes that mental health nurses, researchers and their allies bring about. Oral, workshop and poster presentations which fall into the following themes are welcomed:

1. Mental health nursing research across the generations
 - a. Children and adolescents
 - b. Working age
 - c. Older people
2. No health without mental health
3. Historical, biographical and narrative approaches to mental health research
4. New researchers, new ideas

The deadline for submissions is May 8.

For more information, please contact Laura Benfield at npnr@rcn.org.uk

News from other ENGOS

The call for abstracts for the 22nd Alzheimer Europe Conference in Vienna is now open.

Alzheimer Europe and Alzheimer Angehörige Austria welcome abstracts on the following topics:

- Assistive technologies
- Care services
- Carer support
- Consent, advance directives and guardianship systems
- Diagnosis
- End-of-life issues
- Epidemiology
- Involving people with dementia
- National dementia strategies
- Perceptions of dementia
- Prevention
- Psycho-social interventions
- Quality of life
- Socio-economic cost of dementia
- Stigma and discrimination
- Treatment

To submit an abstract, please go to <http://www.alzheimer-europe.org/Conferences/Vienna-2012/Call-for-abstracts>

News from European Countries

Romanian wins case before Court of Human Rights arguing inhuman treatment in psychiatric hospital

Human rights judges have accepted a complaint against inhuman and degrading conditions suffered by a patient in a Romanian psychiatric hospital.

In the case of *Parascineti v. Romania*, the European Court of Human Rights held unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment) of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The complaint was brought by Mihai Parascineti, who objected to his treatment in an overcrowded psychiatric ward with very poor standards of hygiene. Under Article 41 (just satisfaction) of the Convention, the Court held that Romania was to pay him 6,000 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage and EUR 300 in respect of costs and expenses.

On June 29, 2005, Parascineti, who suffered from serious functional deficiency, with headaches, articular pains, eye problems and congenital dislocation of the hip, for which he had a prosthesis, was admitted to the endocrinology department of the Baia Mare county hospital.

On July 5, 2005 he displayed signs of acute psychosis and was urgently admitted to the psychiatric ward of the Sighetu Marmatiei municipal hospital. While Parascineti alleged that this had occurred when he refused to have an injection, the Romanian government submitted that he had been committed to the psychiatric ward after returning to the hospital under the influence of alcohol and in a state of aggressiveness and agitation.

Parascineti complained that conditions in the psychiatric ward during his stay there from July 5-13, 2005 were appalling, that dozens of patients – some of

whom had scabies and lice – were housed in the same room and that he had even had to share his bed with one or two other patients. The smell from the toilets, which were at one end of the room, was unbearable and, like the other patients, he was not allowed out into the fresh air. Furthermore, all 70 to 100 patients in the ward were given access to the bathroom at the same time and had to share the only two showers there.

For more information, please go to <http://cmiskp.echr.coe.int/tkp197/view.asp?action=open&documentId=903672&portal=hbkm&source=externalbydocnumber&table=F69A27FD8FB86142BF01C1166DEA398649>

France to abandon torturous practices against children with mental health problems and autism

Earlier in March, the French government announced that it is “formally opposed” to the practice of “packing therapy,” a so-called “treatment” for children diagnosed with Au-

tism or psychosis, used in an estimated 300 psychiatric facilities across France. Packing involves tightly wrapping the child’s entire body in wet, refrigerated sheets or towels - with only the head exposed - for almost an hour. Usually, the so-called “packing sessions” are repeated few times a week, sometimes without parental consent. Despite the absence of scientific evidence, French therapists and psychiatrists continue to argue that packing reinforces talk therapy in their effort to “cure” the child.

Former UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Manfred Nowak, has made it clear that it is the responsibility of the State to regulate institutions and that the State can be held responsible if doctors, therapists, social workers or others inflict torture on those within their power. Prior to the government’s announcement, Disability Rights International and other human rights organizations also called on the French ministry to take measures to stop conducting such torturous practices.

No Personal Assistants for Persons with mental health problems in Denmark

Whilst young persons with physical disabilities in Denmark can bring an accompanying person to the cinema free of charge, young persons with mental health problems have to manage on their own.

“The Danish legislation on personal assistance is for children with reduced ‘physical or intellectual ability’, but if you have a psychosocial disability, you cannot get a PA, and this is discrimination” said Danish Association for Mental Health (SIND) Director Palle Heilesen. “I have no doubt that persons with psychosocial disabilities need to be accompanied as much as persons with physical disabilities. This is unequal treatment, which is a violation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,” he added.

The Danish Ministry justified the discrepancy by claiming that while people with physical disabilities only need ordinary support, while people with mental health problems require professional knowledge.

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