

Mental Health Europe News and Policy Work



MHE National Focal Points discuss launch of mental health platforms during comprehensive training

Around 30 MHE members, representing the National Focal Points (NFPs) from all around Europe, got together on the March 22-23 in Brussels for a two-day training. This provided an opportunity for all NFPs to exchange first-hand experiences, while also learning more about developments in European policies relevant for mental health. Moreover, NFPs discussed and prepared the establishment of "National platforms on mental health," an endeavor promoted and supported by MHE. Later in the fall, NFPs will host seminars in six European countries, with the final goal of launching inclusive mental health platforms and promoting cooperation in the NGO sector and beyond.

MHE's NFP training also included a session dedicated to capacity building and empowerment, followed by sessions on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Joint Action on Mental Health, the National Reform Programmes and on deinstitutionalisation. The many external as well as internal speakers, including representatives from the European Commission, the European Expert Group on deinstitutionalisation, the European Disability Forum and a number of MHE members, contributed to the success of the event.

A full report will shortly be available in the MHE members-only section.

Editorial

Dear readers,

Reflecting on April, we at Mental Health Europe are left with mixed feelings. On one hand it was a very successful month for MHE in terms of its lobbying endeavors, as we have met and worked with several Members of the European Parliament willing to advance the cause of mental health. MHE was also part of the Social Platform delegation which went to Cyprus in preparation of the Cypriot Presidency of the EU, engaging with key policy makers and organizing a study visit in close cooperation with our member AIGME. But on the other hand, the recent policy developments at EU level, such as the omission of mental health from the draft EU Health for Growth Program and the removal of the general conditionalities dealing with non-discrimination, gender equality, and disability from the draft structural funds regulations, once again prove that the fight for the rights of people with mental health problems is a constant, unrelenting one.

Looking forward, MHE is thoroughly preparing for its General Assembly, which will take place straight after the main MHE event of the year – the conference in Split dealing with the social determinants of mental health - and where we are looking forward to meeting many of you.

As always, we hope you enjoy reading this newsletter, and we appreciate your feedback and comments.

Maria Nyman, MHE Director

Let's socialize



Highlights

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On World Health Day, MHE asked EU leaders to include mental Health in the EU Health for Growth Programme

“Growth” is definitely one of the European Union’s (EU) favorite buzzwords. With economic growth serving as the ultimate goal, the proposal for the EU Health for Growth Programme 2014-2020 rightfully recognizes health as not merely a value in itself, but a driver for progress and innovation. However, the draft of the €446 million programme misses out on one crucial element – there is so much more than just physical health. Overall health involves, and depends on, mental health and wellbeing.

Therefore, on World Health Day, Mental Health Europe (MHE) called on the EU to include mental health in the proposal for the “Health for Growth Programme 2014-2020”. The draft, which was released by the European Commission and needs to be adopted by the European Parliament and Council of the European Union, completely disregards mental health, which is a serious financial and political mistake. Mental health is an indispensable factor in achieving adequate health for growth, as the economic consequences of mental health problems are estimated at an average of 3-4% of EU’s gross national product. Moreover, mental health problems account for almost 40% of years lived with disability, one in four Europeans experiencing mental health problems at a certain point in their lives.

Furthermore, even though the financial crisis prompted an even higher demand for mental health services, the latter are threatened by huge budget cuts in several EU member states. The service provisions for persons with mental health problems are often inadequate, impacting other areas of society such as the economic, educational,

justice and health care systems. Therefore, including mental health in the Health for Growth Programme 2014-2020 enhances the cross-sectoral approach the Commission promotes.

The European Pact for Mental Health and Well-being, coordinated by the European Commission, recognizes that you cannot improve overall health outcomes without investing in mental health, and that mainstreaming mental health in EU policies majorly benefits society as a whole. It is therefore a pity that the European Commission omitted to streamline the conclusions of its own initiative in the “Health for Growth Programme 2014-2020”. “Mental health problems are wide-ranging, long-lasting and a source of discrimination that goes to the core of the European values,” MHE Director Maria Nyman said. “It is essential that the European Parliament and the Council mainstream mental health and put an emphasis on human capital if they really want to successfully get the results set by the proposal,” she added.

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

MHE travels to Cyprus in preparation of the next EU Presidency

Part of the Social Platform delegation, MHE Social Policy Officer Paulina Banas travelled to Cyprus on April 19-20 to meet Cypriot Ministers. Cyprus will assume Presidency of the Council of the European Union as of June 2012, and the visit provided for a networking opportunity in preparation for the upcoming Presidency.

On the first day of the visit, the Social Platform delegation, joined by a large number of Cypriot NGOs, including MHE member AGMI, met with the Minister of

Upcoming events

XIII European Conference “HOME-less & home-FIRST - from emergency to programming! Different pathways and personalized supports”. Rome, Italy, December 10-12, 2012. For more information, please go to http://www.smes-europa.org/12_Innovation_RMConf_EN.htm

Training Professionals in Mental Health Promotion Conference. London, UK. September 13, 2012. For more information, please contact Chris Griffiths at c.griffiths@mdx.ac.uk

Labour and Social Insurances, Mrs Sotiroula Charalambous. The meeting provided an opportunity for the representatives of the Social Platform delegation to present the EU social priorities to the Cypriot minister.

In his welcoming speech, Conny Reuter, the President of Social Platform, called on Cyprus to rehabilitate the Europe 2020 strategy during their Presidency. Cyprus should play an active role in introducing the social pillar within the economic governance and revitalising the commitment of the Europe 2020 strategy to lift at least 20 million people out of poverty by 2020. Carlotta Bezzosi, the director of European Disability Forum, called on the upcoming Cyprus presidency to properly address the issues of poverty and discrimination in the currently-negotiated new financial instruments of the EU for the period of 2014 - 2020. This included strengthening the implementation of the UNCRPD to promote the rights of people with disabilities. Pierre Baussand, the director of Social Platform, emphasised the need of the Council of the European Union to restart the negotiations on the anti-discrimination directive. He highlighted that although an employment specific anti-discrimination directive already exists, people who face problems in access to education, services or housing, can hardly benefit from employment opportunities.

Therefore, only eradicating discrimination in all areas of life will promote employment and inclusive societies across Europe.

In the afternoon the delegation visited some local projects working in the field of social inclusion and human rights. MHE and AGMI visited Ariadni house, a hostel for people with mental health problems, and SPAVO, a project that supports victims of domestic violence. The visits highlighted problems faced by Cypriot NGOs due to budgetary cuts and constraints. On the second day of the visit, Elise Torrosian from AGMI and Paulina Banas from MHE had bilateral meetings with the representatives of the Cyprus government. First they met with Ms Flourentzou-Kakouri, the director of the Department of Social Inclusion for People with Disabilities and her team. The conversation provided an opportunity to discuss the implementation of UNCRPD in Cyprus and MHE's work on deinstitutionalisation, the future of EU funds, and the situation of people with mental health problems in Cyprus. Next, they met up with Dr. Kyriacou-Georghiou and her colleagues to discuss the new EU regulation for the Health for Growth Programme 2014-2020. The regulation outlines the EU spending towards health priorities at the EU level and at present it does not mention the issues of mental health. MHE is pursuing active advocacy efforts to change this. Both meetings have resulted in fruitful exchanges and are hopefully an initiation of future cooperation with both departments during the Cyprus Presidency of the EU and beyond.

For more information, please contact MHE Social Policy Officer Paulina Banas at paulina.banas@mhe-sme.org

MHE actively lobbies on the new EU Financial Instruments

In the last two months, MHE has undertaken a number of lobby activities with relation to the new European Union (EU) funds for the period of 2014 to 2020. The activities included meeting with Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), compiling briefing documents, contributing to common positions of NGO alliances, and publishing press releases. The activities will continue until the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union agree on the final regulations, most likely after the end of this year.

MHE's task is to ensure that the new funding framework will have a sufficiently large budget and well-set objectives to provide for the continuation of important activities such as giving a voice to people suffering from social exclusion as well as responding to new challenges.

As a priority, MHE focuses on lobby activities for the European Programme for Social Change and Innovation (EUPSCI). This programme, as the successor of PROGRESS, will hopefully be the source of MHE's future core funding.

MHE is also involved in advocacy on the Rights and Citizenship Programme (RCP). This fund merges a number of existing programmes including Daphne, which at present funds MHE's project on combating violence against women 'Train, Reduce, Improve'. MHE has met up with the office of Ms Jutta Steinruck MEP, rapporteur for the EUPSCI, and with the offices of shadow rapporteurs Ms Karima Delli MEP and Ms Elisabeth Schroeder MEP, and has also disseminated the MHE briefing on this regulation to many MEPs mentioned in the National Focal Points reports. MHE and its UK member

Website updates

MHE Position Papers - The Joint equality network amendments to the European Commission proposal for the Rights and Citizenship Programme 2014-2020 is now available at http://www.mhe-sme.org/assets/files/publications/Joint_equality_network_amendments_for_Rights_and_Citizenship_Programme_March2012_final.pdf

The Mental Health Europe briefing on the draft report on the proposal for a regulation of the European Union Programme for Social Change and Innovation 2014-2020 can be found at <http://www.mhe-sme.org/publications/mhe-position-papers.html>

The Mental Health Europe briefing on the draft report on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Statistical Programme 2013-2017 is online at [http://www.mhe-sme.org/assets/files/publications/Eurostat_MHE%20briefing_final\(1\).pdf](http://www.mhe-sme.org/assets/files/publications/Eurostat_MHE%20briefing_final(1).pdf)

organisation Mind also met with Jean Lambert MEP, who is responsible for an opinion on RCP. Both the RCP and the EUPSCI proposals have been discussed during this fruitful exchange and some of our important amendments were submitted by MEPs.

MHE will also prepare an advocacy position on the European Social Fund (ESF), promoting better access of people with psychosocial disabilities to the projects run under the ESF, more focus on community-based services, better access for small NGOs to the said funds, and more focus on combating systemic discrimination on the labour market towards people with disabilities.

To find out more please check our website for a full report and documents, or contact Paulina Banas, MHE social policy officer, at paulina.banas@mhe-sme.org

First police training takes place in Cyprus

On April 24, Cyprus hosted the first of a series of six pilot trainings developed under the Project *Train, Improve, Reduce* led by Mental Health Europe under the European Union Daphne Programme.

The pilot training on domestic violence and mental health was organized by the project partner Advocacy Group for the Mentally Ill (AGMI), and was attended by 18 members from the Cyprus police, from police officers to sergeants and inspectors. Participants to the training showed great satisfaction with the content of the session, as for most of them it was their first opportunity to find out about the links between mental health problems and intimate partner violence.

The pilot trainings, which will be held in May and June in Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, France, Romania and Slovenia seek to give police staff thorough knowledge of the psychological problems associated with domestic violence and to provide them with skills to support them in improving their interventions.

The training also addressed the need for police staff to understand the cycle of domestic violence, in order to both avoid their own frustration when dealing with such cases, and to mitigate the psychological impact they may have when aiding victims of domestic violence.

For more information, please contact Daphne Project Manager Karina Huberman at karina.huberman@mhe-sme.org

MHE presents preliminary findings of its deinstitutionalization report during FRA session in Vienna

On April 19, Mental Health Europe hosted a session at the annual conference of Fundamental Rights Platform, the NGO platform of European

Union's Fundamental Rights Agency, in Vienna. The panel, hosted by MHE Human Rights Officer Gabor Petri, and attended by lawyers, advocates, ombudspersons and experts from the national and the European levels, gave insight into the issue of deinstitutionalization in the psychiatric field, and presented preliminary findings of MHE's upcoming report on deinstitutionalization and community based services. The session was also presided by European Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry representative, Erik Olsen, who talked about the concerns shared by the movement of users and survivors of psychiatry. Both speakers thoroughly emphasized that the maintenance of psychiatric institutions is unacceptable and against major human rights principles.

For more information, please contact MHE Human Rights Officer Gabor Petri at gabor.petri@mhe-sme.org

MHE asks European Patients' Forum General Assembly for more explicit inclusion of mental health

As an EPF associate member, Mental Health Europe was represented by Director Maria Nyman and Senior Policy Adviser Stijn Jannes and at the European Patients' Forum (EPF) general assembly and strategic planning seminar, which took place on April 18-19 in Brussels.

During the GA, the work plans for 2012 and 2013 were discussed and adopted. MHE called for a more explicit inclusion of mental health in the work plans, in order to look at health care from a more holistic perspective. EPF took the proposal very seriously and a meeting will be set up between the two organizations to see how this proposal can be integrated in practice on EPF's work. MHE also called on EPF to not only focus their work on current patients, but

also on future potential patients, which would require awareness-raising actions targeting society in general. Finally, in the strategic planning seminar, MHE advised EPF to widen their scope of work to not only cover health care but also other policy arenas, as many patients – in particular those with chronic illnesses – face discrimination and exclusion in many areas of life. This can only be tackled if a wide range of policies is considered in the work of EPF.

News from MHE Members

National Mental Health Users Network gets launched in Italy

On April 20-21, after a two-day conference at the Casa della Cultura in Florence, the User Tuscany Network in close collaboration with MHE member AISMe has officially launched the first National Mental Health Users Network in Italy. The event was supported by the National health Ministry, the Tuscany Region and the Florence Municipality, as well as by 35 local, national and international associations. Moreover, more than one hundred service users from 13 Italian regions attended the event, along with relatives of people with mental health problems and mental health professionals. The conference focused the responsibility of users on their own recovery process, efficient lawmaking, the users' role in training and education, and the possible establishment of a national user organization. Moreover, a final manifesto was agreed upon, and the regional delegates were been nominated.

For more information, please contact Donatella Miccinesi at aisme.sh@gmail.com

Fundacion Intras launches photography and madness award

MHE member INTRAS Foundation has launched an International Photography and Madness

Award, aiming to present the life of people with mental health problems. from different perspectives - from mundane situations to silly, happy, sad or dramatic, moments. The foundation is therefore inviting national and international photographers, professional and/or fans to tell, through photos, stories of their particular vision of madness. The deadline for submitting photos is May 31, 2012.

For more information, go to <http://premio-fotografia.intras.es>

Council President meets with Social Platform

On April 26, Herman van Rompuy, President of the European Council, addressed Social Platform's General Assembly, focusing on the implementation of the EU social objectives to ensure an inclusive and sustainable recovery. MHE was present at the Assembly as well, represented by MHE Director Maria Nyman, MHE vice-President Rita Donabauer and MHE Social Policy Officer Paulina Banas.

In a fruitful exchange of views, Social Platform told Mr. van Rompuy about the need to include a social pillar in the economic governance of the EU, to support the creation of quality jobs, to invest in equality and ensure that the internal market supports and enables the development of social services and social enterprises, and to develop EU policies with the support of

people living in the EU.

The Platform also reminded him that the European Union's aim is to promote peace and the well-being of its citizen.

In turn, Mr. van Rompuy said that after tackling the financial crisis and sovereign debt crisis, we now have breathing space to tackle social issues. He added that protecting the most vulnerable people in a society is a huge challenge, and that Member States must take their commitments to the EU 2020 strategy targets seriously. Moreover, he reinforced the idea that civil society must make its voice heard in the discussions about the future of Europe.

Hungarian Disability Caucus shows concern over CRPD implementation

The National Council of Disabled Persons' Organisations, Hungarian Civil Liberties Union and the Budapest-based Mental Disability Advocacy Centre denounced the regression of the rights of Hungarians with disabilities caused by the tremendous legislative reform that started in 2010, at a parallel event organized on the occasion of the 7th session of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD Committee) in Geneva. The Caucus delegates said that "The government's blatant disregard for its obligation under Article 4(3) UNCRPD to actively involve the organisations of persons with disabilities in the implementation

work is a grave concern for the Hungarian disability and human rights community." Hungarian activist also highlighted their concerns regarding legal capacity - as of 2011, 57 000 Hungarians with disabilities lived under full or partial guardianship, which, for a country of 10 million inhabitants, is an unacceptably high number. Also, the right to live in the community is being breached as the establishment of 'living centres' for up to 50 inhabitants is encouraged, using EU funds. Hungary is the second EU Member State, after Spain, to be reviewed by the CRPD Committee.

For more information, please visit go to <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/Session7.aspx>

European disability movement candidate gets elected to FRA Advisory Board

Ms. Jamie Bolling, the director of the European Network on Independent Living (ENIL), was elected for a second term on the Fundamental Rights Platform Advisory Panel. The Advisory Panel supports the Director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in the organisation and coordination of the Fundamental Rights Platform (FRP). ENIL, Mental Health Europe and the European Disability Forum supported Ms. Bolling's candidacy.

For more information on the work of the FRA Advisory Panel, go to http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/networks/frp/advisory-panel/advisory-panel_en.htm

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