

Mental Health Europe

MHE News and Policy Work

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VIDEO

Mental health problems on the rise during financial crisis

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BY MÉABH MC MAHON



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Mental Health Europe gets featured on EU Observer

Mental Health Europe Human Rights Officer Gabor Petri gave a lengthy interview to the EU Observer, one of the most influential Brussels media.

In a video focusing on the rise of reported mental health problems during the financial crisis, Petri talked about how budget cuts result in reduced personal assistance hours, affecting users of mental health services. He also argued the cause of deinstitutionalization, highlighting the human rights aspects of living in closed residential institutions by refer-

ing to empirical research. Mental Health Europe strongly supports the transition from institutions to community based services. MHE has also commissioned a report on the state of the art of the process of deinstitutionalization in the mental health field in Europe. The report is expected to come out in late Spring.

To watch the video, please go to <http://euobserver.com/1015/114707>
For more information, please contact MHE Human Rights Officer Gabor Petri at gabor.petri@mhe-sme.org

Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of the Mental Health Europe Newsletter in 2012! I took over from Mary van Dievel as the Director of MHE in the beginning of January. I look forward to a challenging year, where mental health promotion, respect of human rights, social inclusion and combating of stigma will be the pillars on which we will base our work. With your support, I trust that we will raise Mental Health even higher on the political agenda this year. A number of tools are at our disposal, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the EU Structural Funds and the European Pact on Mental Health and Well-being. The MHE conference and Annual General Assembly in Split, Croatia, on June 14-16 will be the highlight of this year. This conference is organized together with the Croatian organisation Sto Koluri, on the theme of Social Determinants of Mental Health. This year will also focus on capacity building. A training of National Focal Points and six seminars for the establishment of national platforms for mental health are planned. These are a few of a multitude of activities that are planned for 2012. Information will be provided throughout the year. Keep your eyes peeled!

Maria Nyman, MHE Director

Let's socialize



Highlights

Mental Health Europe gets featured on EU Observer

Reminder - send your abstracts for the MHE 2012 Conference

MHE Welcomes European Year, underlines link between employment and mental health

MHE publishes guide on EU institutions and policies, in 21 languages

Keep in Mind

A quick guide to European Institutions and EU policy-making relevant to mental health and people with mental health problems



MHE publishes useful guide on EU institutions and policies

To come to the aid of our members who might be struggling with often cumbersome European Union (EU) terminology, Mental Health Europe has compiled a quick guide to EU Institutions and policies relevant for people working in the health sector, or for mental health service users. The guide, which was published in 21 European languages gives an overview of EU policy and decision-making, but also presents readers with means to get involved in lobbying the EU Bodies.

To read the guide, please go to <http://www.mhe-sme.org/publications/mhe-leaflets.html>

MHE welcomes European Year 2012, stresses link between employment and mental health

Mental Health Europe welcomed the official launch of the European Year 2012 by underlining the strong connection between employment and mental health in older people. For older people, staying in employment contributes not only to an increased level of financial security, but also to a more fulfilling social life and

a stronger sense of belonging to community. At the same time, employers can greatly benefit from hiring older workers, who may have a more holistic approach due to the knowledge and expertise accumulated during their working life.

Staying active in later life is crucial to maintaining good physical and mental health. Mental Health Europe thus expects real commitments from the Danish Presidency, under whose auspices the European Year will be launched. MHE was present at the launch conference in Copenhagen on January 18-19, ensuring that mental health is clearly reflected in all policy outcomes.

“Mental health is a crucial element to active ageing, and should not be overlooked. Still, it is important to recognize that while most older people would benefit from employment or volunteering, mental health problems such as dementia or Alzheimer’s might prevent some from doing so,” MHE President Nace Kovac said. “However, older people with mental health problems should also be given the means to lead an active life, included in society through adequate and dignified support measures, adapted to the individual needs,” Kovac added.

To read our press release, please go to http://www.mhe-sme.org/news-and-events/mhe-press-releases/older_people.html. To read our representative’s account of the opening conference, go to page 5.

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 different methods for improving the social environment in schools and workplaces, encouraging inclusion

Upcoming events

ENIL Hearing - “Defend the right of independent living - How the EU’s austerity policy is undermining the lives of people with disabilities.” February 9. Brussels, Belgium

For more information, please contact Ines Bulic at ines.bulic@enil.eu

Conference “Psychotherapy in Europe - Putting the record straight.” February 9. Brussels, Belgium MHE Senior Policy Advisor Stijn Jannes is one of the speakers.

For more information, please contact the Federal Chamber of Psychotherapists in Germany at info@bptk.de

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

For more information, please email conference@esn-eu.org

Website updates

MHE Press Releases - Our press release on the launch of the European Year 2012 is now available at http://www.mhe-sme.org/news-and-events/mhe-press-releases/older_people.html

MHE Leaflets - Our Quick guide on EU Institutions and policies is available in 21 languages at <http://www.mhe-sme.org/publications/mhe-leaflets.html>

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](#) and send it to Yves Brand at yves.brand@mhe-sme.org and Maja Soco at maja.soco@stokoluri.org

News from MHE Members

MHE members develop innovative training courses

Believing that Europe needs to end the social stigma attached to mental illness, MHE members Fundacion INTRAS and OZARA are running a project aimed at reintegrating people with mental health problems in the job market. The SUVOT (Spicing Up Vocational Training) project will establish innovative vocational training courses in cooking for people with mental health problems, learning disabilities or/and behavioral disorders, by developing a simulation methodology which facilitates the acquirement of personal and social skills needed to work in the cooking sector. Through this initiative, the SUVOT team wants to develop the cognitive, social and practical skills of people suffering from mental health problems, but also to facilitate their access to the labor market.

For more information, go to <http://suvot.intras.es/>

EU releases call for proposals

The European Commission released its work plan 2012 for the Health Programme. The work plan sets out activities that the European Commission may co-fund in the field of health, such as:

- Projects - should not exceed three years and should concentrate on the following priorities:
 - Support to the European Innovation Partnership on active and healthy ageing
 - Local community including school based initiatives to prevent obesity among children
 - Good practice and working methods to support healthy choices and enhance life skills to prevent alcohol-related harm integrated into regular youth activities or through peer support
 - Preventing chronic diseases
- Conferences
- Operating grants: issues include active and healthy ageing, including health promotion and prevention of diseases, prevention of health inequalities, ensuring better access to health care for all
- In 2012 five joint actions will be funded, including one on mental health and well-being.

The deadline for submitting proposals is March 9, 2012.

For more information, go to <http://ec.europa.eu/eahc/health/index.html>

Danish Presidency publishes priorities

As of January 1, Denmark has been holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. This six-month Presidency

will concentrate on several pressing priorities such as jobs and economic growth, budget talks and the current global financial crisis. Due to the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, the Presidency will also focus on social policy issues such as older workers and the demographic challenge, the rising youth unemployment and the impact of the economic and social crisis on living and working environments. Two important health documents will be discussed during the Danish Presidency – the new Framework Programme in the field of Health called Health For Growth, which was published at the end of 2011 by the European Commission, and the EU Health Strategy.

More information is available at: <http://eu2012.dk/en>

New EP President interested in growth and jobs

With 387 votes in favor, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have elected German politician Martin Schulz as the new EP President, for a two-year renewable term. Schulz, the leader of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) has expressed a strong interest in sustainable growth, stating that Europe needs to “overcome the challenges of globalization.” Arguing for social solidarity, the EP President said that “it is important to strive for an open, pluralistic and multi-ethnic society.” On his Facebook page, he also said the EP stands for equality, respect and fighting against any discrimination.

For more information, go to <http://www.martin-schulz.info/>



MHE welcomes Strasbourg Court deeming detention unlawful

On January 17, the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights delivered a landmark victory for the rights of persons with psycho-social and intellectual disabilities in the case of *Stanev v. Bulgaria*. The Court found a violation of Article 5 (1) of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), finding that the applicant was “detained” in a social care institution. “Following this judgement, States throughout Europe must end policies and practices that unnecessarily restrict the liberty of thousands of persons with psycho-social disabilities and intellectual disabilities in the provision of social care,” stated Lycette Nelson, the Litigation Director of Mental Disability Advocacy Center (MDAC). The judgment unanimously stated that consent to such placement is necessary to avoid violating the European Convention of Human Rights, so states must develop alternatives to ensure all have the right to live in the community.

“Bulgaria must revise its laws restricting legal capacity to bring them into line with international law and the Court’s judgment, so that people can be supported to

make their own decisions, rather than having their right to make decisions stripped from them,” said MDAC Executive Director Oliver Lewis.

To find out more about the case, please go to: http://www.mdac.info/17/01/2012/Europe_s_highest_human_rights_court_issues_landmark_disability_rights_ruling

European Day of Disabled People focuses on effects of crisis

On December 1-2, 2011 the European Commission organised its annual event to celebrate the European Day of Disabled People. The conference attracted almost 300 participants, including representatives of Mental Health Europe, key players in the disability policy field, experts and service providers, and people with disabilities. The event focused on the impact of the financial crisis on the life of disabled people, but presentations covered topics such as the implementation of the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UN CRPD), employment, research and youth policies.

Presentations from the event are available at : http://ec.europa.eu/justice/newsroom/discrimination/events/eventedpd2011_en.htm

MHE supports Venice Commission in backing right to vote

On December 19, the Venice Commission, an influential group of constitutional law experts, amended one of its key documents. In doing so, it reversed an anomaly which allowed countries to exclude people with “genuine mental disabilities” from voting in elections.

Through the Save the Vote campaign, lead by Mental Disability Advocacy Center and supported by Mental Health Europe, a range of NGOs carried out direct advocacy with Venice Commission members and organised several events in 2011. As a result, the Venice Commission adopted a new document which states that “Universal suffrage is a fundamental principle of the European Electoral Heritage. People with disabilities may not be discriminated against in this regard, in conformity with Article 29 of the Convention of the United Nations on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the caselaw of the European Court of Human Rights.” NGO leaders and advocates believe that this decision will have a great influence on European countries legislative systems resulting the removal of barriers which have hindered the participation of people with mental health problems in the voting process.

News from European Countries

Germany – Peter Lehmann receives Federal Cross of Merits

Mental Health Europe would like to congratulate long-standing advocate for (ex-) users and survivors of psychiatry Peter Lehmann, who was honored with the “Federal Cross of Merits” for his continuous work in the human rights fields. Mr. Lehmann was,

and still is, an activist in search of alternatives to psychiatry and one of the fathers of the “Humanistic Antipsychiatry.” In 2010, he also received a doctor honoris causa at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki for his extraordinary scientific and humanitarian work on users’ rights.

Peter is a writer and pedagogue, founder of various organizations defending and supporting users’ rights such as the European Network of (ex)Users and Survivors of Psychiatry (ENUSP) and the Runaway House in Berlin. Mr. Lehman was also an MHE Board Member.

Bulgaria - Bulgarian Parliament ratifies UN CRPD

On January 26 the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria has passed a law on the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), submitted by the Bulgarian Government on January 4. Bulgaria had signed the Convention on September 27, 2007 and its Optional Protocol on December 18, 2008 assuming the obligation to ratify it. Bulgarian Minister of Labor and Social Policy Totyu Mladenov noted that in 6 months he will present the Council of Minister a two-year plan for the application of the UN CRPD in the country.

News from other ENGOs

ENIL organizes hearing on cuts at the European Parliament

As a result of the financial crisis, many government introduced austerity measures which often implied the cutback of funds spent on health and social services. Recognizing this, the European Network of Independent Living (ENIL) is going to organise an event in the European Parliament, showcasing the impact austerity measures are having on people with disabilities in the European Union (EU). ENIL will also set out actions that can be taken by the European Parliament and the European Commission to address this situation. These will include the ENIL Proposal for the European Parliament Resolution on the effect of cuts in public spending on persons with disabilities in the EU.

The hearing will take place on February 9, at the European Parliament in Brussels and Mental Health Europe will also be represented.

More information on the event is available at: <http://enil.eu/2011/12/enil-hearing-on-cuts-at-the-european-parliament/>

European Year 2012

EY2012 Conference misses mental health aspect

Mental Health Europe Board member Marita Ruohonen represented MHE at the opening conference of the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, which took place in Copenhagen on January 18-19. Focused on the need for older people to remain active in the labor market for longer, play an active role in society, and stay healthy and independent, the conference gathered more than 300 participants. Although packed with interesting presentations on senior citizens and the need and potential of the reforms, Ms. Ruohonen felt that the focus was very much on active, healthy seniors who did not want to leave their interesting jobs. Poor or sick seniors did not get any attention before the last discussion when this side of ageing was taken up by audience. Moreover, mental health was not mentioned at all. To put mental health problems on the agenda, MHE has created a task force on ageing and mental health, which will highlight the importance of mental health for senior citizens and research ways to improve the access to services and care for older people.

For more information on the conference, please go to www.eu2012.dk

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