



*Brussels, 5 December 2007*

## **Mental Health Europe and John Bowis MEP together for the promotion of mental well-being in employment**

**Mental Health Europe (MHE) and John Bowis MEP (EPP-ED Group) hosted today a lunch debate on "Equal Chance, Equal Respect: Promoting Mental Health and Well-being in Employment".**

The debate focused on a key cross-cutting issue impacting on social and health policies in the EU, namely the mental well-being in employment. In Europe, one in five people at work suffers from a high level of stress at work, the second most common health symptom. Stressors at work increase the risk of anxiety, depression and burn out.

"Mental health conditions in employment cannot be explained by one set of factors alone. There is a need for a multi-sectoral, holistic approach to mental health and employment policies", said Malgorzata Kmita, President of Mental Health Europe.

The debate emphasised how the provision of training and social support at work, and the development of empowerment can lead to improvements in competence, coping strategies, job satisfaction, work capacity and reduced stress.

"I fully support my colleague John Bowis MEP, rapporteur for the European Parliament on the Green Paper on Mental Health, when he says that Europe needs a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to address the challenges of an ever-evolving and demanding working environment, affecting the mental well-being of people at work and beyond. Co-operating and linking all the relevant initiatives, policies and stakeholders at all levels will be crucial to the next cycle of the Lisbon strategy", said Frieda Brepoels\* MEP.

Today's debate fed into the Lisbon strategy 2008-2010 and the EU Health Strategy 2008 - 2013. The Lisbon strategy for the economic and social renewal of Europe highlights the need for both more and better jobs, and for improved social inclusion and gender equality. The Commission's Health Strategy White Paper recognises that mental health problems are a major cause of work absenteeism and early retirement, thereby causing immense economic losses and social burdens.

Encouraging and supporting the creation of healthy companies and workplaces, which include safe working environments and mentally healthy working practices, can help promoting mental well-being and addressing psychosocial risk factors at the workplace.

### ***For further information:***

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\* Frieda Brepoels MEP (EPP-ED Group) replaced John Bowis MEP at the lunch debate.



**Notes to Editors:**

Mental Health Europe (MHE) is a European non-governmental 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 (ex)users of mental health services, their families and carers. For more information: [www.mhe-sme.org](http://www.mhe-sme.org)

MHE is amongst others involved in a European research project focusing on mental well-being promotion and protection strategies in three life stages and three contexts, i.e. the workplace, school and residences for older people, and aiming at producing a proposal for a 'cross-sectoral' mental health policy platform. The project is funded by the European Commission under the 6th Framework Programme. For more information: [www.mentalhealthpromotion.net](http://www.mentalhealthpromotion.net)