

MENTAL HEALTH EUROPE – SANTE MENTALE EUROPE aisbl  
Boulevard Clovis 7, B-1000 Brussels  
Tel +32 2 280 04 68 - Fax +32 2 280 16 04  
e-mail: [info@mhe-sme.org](mailto:info@mhe-sme.org)  
[www.mhe-sme.org/](http://www.mhe-sme.org/)

Brussels, December 2005

Dear colleagues,

The European Commission - Directorate General Health, Consumer Protection and Environment (DG Sanco) launched last October a Green Paper on "Improving the mental health of the population: towards a strategy on mental health for the European Union".

Mental Health Europe has been involved in the elaboration of this Green Paper from an early stage.

You can find the text of the Green Paper (in 20 languages!) at the following link:  
[http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/mental/green\\_paper/ev\\_20051024\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_determinants/life_style/mental/green_paper/ev_20051024_en.htm)

The Green Paper builds on three elements:

- 1) activities under past and current EU Public Health Programmes
- 2) six mental health-related Council documents since 1999
- 3) the WHO/Euro Ministerial conference on Mental Health and its outcomes (Declaration and Action Plan).

The key messages in the Green Paper are:

- 1) mental health is important for all European Union policy objectives (health, quality of life, economic and social welfare, transition to a knowledge society as stated in the Lisbon Agenda)
- 2) the development of a EU strategy on mental health at Community level would support the collaboration between member states and would help to increase the co-ordination and coherence of mental health initiatives which have emerged in many different EU policy fields
- 3) evidence-based options for action to promote mental health and to prevent mental ill health are available. However, they are not known well enough and not sufficiently integrated into European and national policies.
- 4) serious challenges have been identified:
  - the mental health of the EU population is not as good as it should be (high suicide rates in some Member States, increased conduct disorders in children and young people, mental ill health is increasingly often the reason for work absenteeism)
  - people with mental health problems experience stigma and discrimination; their fundamental rights and dignity are not always respected.

The Green Paper has identified the following priorities:

- 1) to promote mental health and address mental ill health by preventive measures
- 2) to prevent the major mental disorders and support vulnerable groups
- 3) to promote the social inclusion of people with mental health problems and protect their fundamental rights and dignity
- 4) to improve the mental health information and knowledge system for the EU.

On the basis of the outcomes of the consultation process, the European Commission will prepare a proposal for a EU strategy on mental health, which would be presented by the end of 2006.

We attach a copy of the European Commission Information Note on the Green Paper.

The European Commission invites responses to the three questions posed in the Green Paper in Section 8 on page 13.

You are however free to comment on any aspects of your perceptions of the Green Paper in general, and not only to these three questions.

Mental Health Europe regrets that the Green Paper did not start with the importance of promoting and maintaining good mental health instead of focussing on the burden of mental disorders.

The competence of the European Commission within the Public Health Programme is in the promotion of mental health and the prevention of disease. It is important therefore to stress the Public Health approach to positive mental health

This consultation process is a golden opportunity for all of us in the mental health field, and as many organisations and people as possible (including the public at large) should be encouraged to have their say and to comment on the Green Paper.

Please consult your membership, your contacts, your friends and colleagues, and send your findings to your national, regional and local levels of government as well to the European Commission, **BUT ALSO TO MENTAL HEALTH EUROPE!**

We will collate all the reactions received and prepare a synthesis of our members' comments and report these to the European Commission.

In addition to our members of MHE we will also be consulting other stakeholders, such as user groups, family and carer organisations, professional organisations including psychiatrists, psychologists general practitioners, nurses, social workers, colleagues in education, in the justice sector and many others in civil society.

We look forward to hearing from you by 15 April 2006 at the latest.  
This gives us 6 weeks in which to collate the reactions we will receive.

We thank you in advance and look forward to hearing from you!

Kind regards,

Mary Van Dievel,  
Director.