



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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French, Czech and Swedish's EU presidencies should address other dementias besides Alzheimer's disease

Ahead of the European conference on Alzheimer's disease on 30-31 October in Paris under the auspices of the French Presidency of the EU, Mental Health Europe (MHE) sent an open letter to the French presidency to call for the inclusion of other dementias besides Alzheimer's disease in the health priority.

The 18 months programme of the Council of the European Union as established by the French, Czech and Swedish presidencies, states that "in the context of our ageing societies, the Presidencies will draw particular attention to Alzheimer's disease by focusing efforts at EU level on enhancing the coordination of research and the exchange of experiences relating to healthcare and solidarity with carers concerned."

MHE welcomes the French presidency initiative around Alzheimer's disease, and is confident that similar activities can be organised for other subtypes of dementia.

In its open letter, MHE calls upon the French and the future EU presidencies to acknowledge that there are many other forms of dementia than only Alzheimer, and to take action urgently to include also other forms of dementias. It is incorrect to use the title Alzheimer's disease for the collective including other dementias of the neurodegenerative system. The use of the classification title Alzheimer's disease or dementia is applicable only when the signs, symptoms and test results equate with dementia of the Alzheimer type.

Evidence* show that dementia affects approximately 5% of those over 65 and 20% of those over 80. Clinical studies from both hospital and community samples demonstrate substantial overlap between subtypes of dementia. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia as it may be responsible for 2 out of every 3 cases. Nevertheless, by using the title Alzheimer's disease as catch-all for every subtype of dementia there is every likelihood that the other subtypes of dementia are either forgotten or neglected in the political arena.

To identify dementia by one subtype alone does no justice to the identification, diagnosis and determination of appropriate interventions for specific subtypes of dementia. To avoid unfairly addressing a sub-type of dementia only, MHE invites the EU Presidency either to use the global term dementia and make clear the subtypes or - given the preponderance of Alzheimer's dementia - to include in the health priority the concept of "**Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias**".

* See annex : EURODEM figures on dementias by country in 2002 and 2005



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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