



**MENTAL HEALTH EUROPE BRIEFING MEETING WITH DIRECTORS OF
MHE MENTAL HEALTH ORGANISATIONS
BRUSSELS, 28-29 APRIL 2008**

On 28-29 April 2008 MHE organised a briefing meeting with the directors of mental health organisations that are part of the MHE network. The aim of the meeting was to provide MHE member organisations with an overview of recent developments in the field of EU social and health policy, and to discuss the establishment of MHE national focal points.

After a welcome by Malgorzata Kmita, MHE President, and Mary Van Dievel, MHE Director, Trude Eliassen from the European Commission, Unit E2: Social Protection and Social Inclusion, presented the Commission's PROGRESS Programme for Employment and social Solidarity. The presentation was followed by an overview of the EU Public Health Programme given by Mari Fresu, MHE Policy Officer. Christiane Marking from Marking Public Affairs then gave a comprehensive introduction to lobbying the European institutions and highlighted ways for the MHE members to lobby and advocate for mental health and well-being at all policy levels.

The rest of the day was dedicated to presentations on examples of national focal points and networks of other organisations, at the European level (presented by the European Federation of Associations for the Homeless-FEANTSA) as well as at the national level (presented by Pro Mente Austria, Spanish Association for Neuro-Psychiatry-AEN, GGZ Netherlands).

As a result of the following discussion, MHE together with its member organisations decided to appoint national focal points that shall support an enhanced and intensified flow of information on EU policies and processes in MHE's main areas of work. A national focal point is a representative from one of MHE's member organisations per country.

Under MHE's work plan for the years 2008-2010 with the title "*Working together in the EU – Enhancing communication, collaboration and commitment in the fight against poverty and social exclusion of people with mental health problems*" – supported by the European Commission PROGRESS Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity – a new mode of information exchange and consultation is envisaged involving national focal points that are in close contact with MHE on the one hand and with all MHE members in their country on the other hand. They will act as intermediaries between MHE and its member organisations in cases where a) information from the European level needs to be disseminated at the national, regional and local level, as well as in cases where b) MHE needs input from its members working at the local, regional and national level in order to report back to the European level on specific issues of consultation. Special trainings for the national focal points will support their ability to act in this capacity on behalf of MHE.

The meeting concluded on the next day with a visit to the European Parliament and a presentation of the Parliament's powers, set-up, organisation and decision-making.

Mental Health Europe, April 2008