



MHE view on the work programme of the Swedish EU Presidency

Which priorities for mental health and well-being?

On 1 July 2009, Sweden took over the Presidency of the Council of the EU from the Czech Republic. As stated in the work programme of the Swedish EU presidency, the coming six months will be characterised by both change and renewal. The newly elected European Parliament will begin its work and a new Commission will be appointed. The conditions for cooperation will change if the Treaty of Lisbon enters into force. The most important challenges are the economy, employment and climate – issues that affect each and every citizen of the EU.

Mental Health Europe (MHE) would like to express its view on the EU Presidency work priorities as for those policy priorities concerning mental health and well-being.

The Swedish Presidency will in fact take initiative in many areas that are relevant to MHE work as they impact on the mental health and well-being of the population:

Swedish Presidency priorities in the field of Employment and Social Policy

In the field of employment and social policy, the Swedish Presidency aims to reduce the negative effects of the **ongoing crisis**; to find measures to reintegrate the **unemployed** into the labour market and to promote the **active participation** of people with a reduced work capacity because of ill-health. The Presidency aims to contribute to the work on the EU's new strategy for growth and jobs which will replace the Lisbon Strategy.

MHE view on the employment and social priorities

Mental Health Europe will pursue the work of the Swedish Presidency and continue to bring forward the inclusion of people with mental health problems into the labour market.

MHE's position is that everyone should be entitled to a minimum income in order to be able to follow a dignified life and to access quality health services. In this frame, MHE advocates for a swift implementation of the European Commission's Active Inclusion Strategy (adopted in 2008) that covers the areas of adequate income support, inclusive labour markets and access to quality services. MHE will also contribute to the discussion of the new EU strategy for growth and jobs in order to strengthen its social dimension.

Swedish Presidency priorities in the field of Human Rights and Disability

In the field of human rights and disability, the Presidency foresees that work to counter all forms of discrimination is a priority. The Presidency will work to ensure that decisions can be taken on the directive on the **equal treatment** of persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. The work of the Presidency will continue on regulating passenger rights and the Presidency will aim for agreements on regulations on both bus and ship passengers.

MHE view on the Human Rights and Disability priorities

Despite the issue of discrimination is addressed in the work programme, MHE regrets the weak commitment of the Presidency re the directive proposed by the European Commission in July 2008 and which is still under discussion within the EU institutions. In particular, MHE is disappointed by the fact that the Presidency did not set clear priorities in this field, and by the lack of attention for the ratification process of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. MHE will follow the work of the Swedish Presidency in the field of disability and human rights for people with mental health problems, with a special attention to the actions towards non-discrimination policies.

MHE will continue its work together with European Disability Forum on many key issues relevant to mental health policies. In particular, MHE wishes the Swedish Presidency to keep working on the access to transport for disabled persons, which is an important issue included also in the UN Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities (Article 9). MHE is particularly concerned about the issue of access to transport for people with psychosocial impairments because it believes that quality transport offer more chances for a full and dignified inclusion in the society.

Swedish Presidency priorities on the promotion of Mental health and Well-being

Among other health issues, the Swedish Presidency's work programme aims to increase the opportunities for **healthy and dignified ageing** for older people in the EU as well as to improve cooperation to promote good living conditions for **young people** in the EU.

MHE view on the (mental) health promotion priorities

MHE will follow actively the policy developments and take actions in the field of healthy ageing as it considers this as a central issue for mental health and wellbeing. This is also acknowledged in the European Pact for Mental Health and Wellbeing, which recognises older people as one of the five thematic priorities for coordinated actions in the mental health field at the EU level.

MHE is also pleased with the Presidency's commitment to improve the living conditions of the youth as it believes that the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people is fundamental to the future social and economic growth of the European region.

In particular, much more can be done to promote mental health and well-being and prevent mental disorders in the early years of life and amongst children and young people. This requires targeted support and actions particularly where there is increased evidence of risk factors for poor mental health and mental illness.

Swedish Presidency priorities in the field of Gender:

The Presidency work programme will also focus on **gender equality**. Important issues include initiatives to counter men's violence against women, to create better opportunities to both reconcile work and family life and provide increased health and safety protection in the workplace.

MHE view on the Gender priorities

In line with the Presidency vision in the gender area, MHE states that in order to ensure growth and development, the EU must make better use of the potential of both women and men. In particular, MHE believes that the EU policies should better protect the mental health of the population by adopting a gender-sensitive approach.

For more information

Swedish EU Presidency website: <http://www.se2009.eu/>

Mental Health Europe website: www.mhe-sme.org