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REPORT

NATIONAL FOCAL POINT TRAINING ROUND 2009

Vienna, 22-23 January 2009

Athens, 19-20 February 2009

Brussels, 12-13 March 2009

Copenhagen, 26-27 March 2009

Helsinki, 23-24 April 2009

The training of Mental Health Europe National Focal Points was made possible thanks to the support of PROGRESS, the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007-2013).

The aim of the trainings for National Focal Points was to provide the participants with an update on ongoing developments in the field of mental health and social inclusion policies on the European level and also to provide lobbying tools as e.g. how to approach national/ regional authorities or the respective national Members of European Parliament (MEPs).

All trainings started with an overview about **Mental Health Europe's work programme and the role of National Focal Points** given by Mary Van Dievel, MHE Director, followed by an introduction round where every participating country was given the opportunity to present their organisation and to report on the mental health situation in their respective country and about their activities as the MHE National Focal Point up to date.

In the following, a presentation about **EU institutions, decision-making procedures and recent policy developments regarding mental health and social inclusion** was given by Astrid Mechel, MHE Social Policy Officer. In the presentation, the current developments on EU level in relation to the Lisbon Strategy and Open Method of Coordination were elaborated, such as the EU's Active Inclusion Strategy, the National Strategic Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion for the years 2008-2010, the European Pact for Mental Health and Well-being as well as funding opportunities. An updated booklet with information on this topic was produced prior to the training and distributed to the participants, together with a list of the Members of the Social Protection Committee.

For the agenda item **"Lobbying at the national and regional level"** a local expert was given the floor to give a practical example on concrete lobbying strategies pursued in the respective country where the NFP training took place.

Vienna:

Rita Donabauer, Managing Director of Promente Upper Austria, together with Elisabeth Muschik, Vice President of MHE and Promente Austria, gave an overview about their work on the national level with concrete examples how they pursue lobbying at the national and regional level in Austria. Their presentation included as well public relations and their work with journalists.

Athens:

For the agenda item "Lobbying at the national and regional level", Menelaos Theodoroulakis, President of the Coordination Committee of ARGOS Network and Member of the Executive Committee of PEPSAEE (Panhellenic Union for the Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Work Integration) presented the Argos network, an association of 36 NGOs working in the mental health field. A particular emphasis was given in the presentation to the current crisis of the Greek health system, the Minister of Health's refusal to fulfill the financial obligations towards the Psychosocial Rehabilitation Units despite the recommendations of the European Union, which puts thousands of people with mental health problems at direct risk and the funding problems over the last 4 years leading the Greek health system to the edge of collapse. Payments to the PSYCHARGOS programme have therefore been suspended by the European Social Fund. Menelaos presented Argos' lobbying strategy in response to the crisis of the health system and towards the continuation of the PSYCHARGOS programme, covering a wide target audience from local, national to European level. The most successful activities in this regard have been so far: Networking with the official agencies for the protection of the human rights of the patients, reporting of the situation to the Greek Ombudsman, reporting of the situation to the European Social Fund, informing the Members of the European Parliament, organizing Demonstrations with the participation of users and families, press releases and special articles. A very lively discussion on crisis of health systems in Greece followed after the presentation.

Brussels:

Jos Sterckx from Kleis gave a presentation on "Lobbying at the national and regional level", outlining lobbying ethics, how to develop a strong position and implement a concrete lobbying strategy and action plan to influence legislative proposals. He stressed as well the importance of a good insider knowledge of the political scene, informal contacts and networking as well as the application of the fairness and transparency principles.

Copenhagen:

Per K. Larsen from the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Denmark gave a presentation about EAPN Denmark's lobbying activities in preparation of the EY 2010 against Poverty and Social Exclusion. He outlined the definition the objectives for the EY 2010 such as dissemination of knowledge, focus on vulnerable groups, to bring forward themes that are important for the poor and socially excluded people in Denmark and to develop a broader cooperation between NGOs, researchers,

authorities and the media. In order to reach these objectives, quantitative (increasing the information and awareness among stakeholders and in the civil society) as well as qualitative (adding data to experts', administrators' and stakeholders' work) methods are applied.

Helsinki:

Marita Ruohonen, the Executive Director of the Finnish Association for Mental Health gave a presentation about "Lobbying at the national and regional level". She pointed out that successful lobbying needs to take place on all possible levels, i.e. local, regional, national and international level, whereas the involvement should already take place in the beginning/ planning phase of a new legislation or project. Lobbying actions should be targeted at politicians at all these levels, involving politicians from as many parties as possible. Furthermore, the responsible civil servants on all levels should be approached as well. The strengthening of forces with other key actors and partners and building networks are another decisive success factor. Communication and the media play a crucial role, also in disseminating good practices.

In the following part of the trainings, Astrid Mechel presented the **MHE Campaign for Awareness-raising on Mental Health issues in the frame of the upcoming elections for the European Parliament** in June 2009. Discussions about awareness-raising strategies for the mental health issue among MEP candidates and political parties as well as about the priorities that should be taken up in the MHE Elections Manifesto followed. The participants also exchanged their experiences in working with European and also national members of parliament. Awareness-raising as well as the identification of parliamentarians who are supportive to the mental health cause is crucial. Participants were asked to send the names of the MEPs who are sensitive to mental health promotion to MHE after the elections.

The second training day started with a presentation given by Mary Van Dievel about "**Working with the Media**", during the training in Athens followed by a contribution from Alexandros Lountzis from the Mental Health Institute for Children and Adults, Greece, who spoke afterwards about how to target a message to the key audience, using a positive language. All participants exchanged their experiences, in particular about how to pass on the message to the journalists to avoid the reproduction/re-enforcement of stigma in the press and to raise a sense of sensitivity among the journalists for the right choice of words (i.e. in order to avoid an emulation of suicide etc). In the Helsinki training round, Kristina Salonen, Communications Director at the Finnish Association for Mental Health (FAMH), then presented the communication and media strategy of the FAMH. All participants exchanged their experiences, in particular about how to pass on the message to the journalists to avoid the reproduction/re-enforcement of stigma in the press and to raise a sense of sensitivity among the journalists for the right choice of words (i.e. in order to avoid an emulation of suicide etc). Sophie Corlett from MIND, England and Wales, reported that MIND has developed media guidelines/ a manual for journalists: http://www.samaritans.org/media_centre/media_guidelines.aspx. The FAMH also developed a manual, which is available in Finnish language.

Mary Van Dievel (in Brussels: Roselyne Bourgon, MHE Human Rights Officer and José Van Remoortel, MHE Senior Policy Advisor) presented the **UN Convention on**

the Rights of Disabled People and its ratification process. The links with mental health issues were outlined, as well as the role of the National Focal Points to promote the Convention's principles. Tasks include raising awareness on the existence of the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities and particularly contacting the respective national government to inform about the Convention, lobbying national authorities and decision makers to encourage them to sign and ratify the Convention and to induce legislative competent organs to create legislations which implement properly the Convention and its Optional Protocol's main provisions. MHE Human Rights Officer Roselyne Bourgon is the contact person within MHE who can give more ample information on the UN Convention and related NFP lobbying activities.

During the last session of the training, the participants discussed **fundraising tools** to find funding for the European work of the MHE National Focal Points. Prior to the meeting, the NFPs received a support letter from MHE that can be attached to any (national) funding request as well as a letter of recognition of the appointment of the respective organisation as the National Focal Point. In Helsinki, Alli Brummer, Director of Administration at the FAMH, gave a detailed overview about FAMH's overall funding sources which is mainly coming from the funds of the Finnish slot machines association. It was mentioned by the participants that funding out of gambling/ lottery is in principle also possible in Estonia, Ireland and the UK. Other possibilities that were discussed to receive funding for mental health were donations, last wills, church collections (Ireland), street fundraising, selling charity season's cards (UK), internet-banking supported donations schemes (Estonia) and portals on web shops (Latvia).

The overall feedback received was positive. The participants expressed that the information given during the training was very useful, e.g. to be informed about European policies, the understanding of EU procedures and how this affects the national level and how they as National Focal Point can make an impact. It was also pointed out that the participants enjoyed the networking and intensive inter-active participation in the training with the possibility to address views, ask questions and in particular the exchange of best practices within the group.

MHE, 30 April 2009

About Mental Health Europe

Mental Health Europe (MHE) is an 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 people with mental health problems, their families and carers. MHE vision is of a Europe where mental health and well-being is given high priority in the political spectrum and on the European health and social agenda, where people with mental health problems live as full citizens with access to appropriate services and support when needed, and where meaningful participation is guaranteed at all levels of decision-making and administration. MHE's values are based on dignity and respect, equal opportunities, freedom of choice, anti-discrimination, social inclusion, democracy and participation.

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