Social Platform Annual Conference
Brussels, 9-10 December 2008

COMMON WORKSHOP MHE/SOLIDAR:

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF EUROPEAN NGO NETWORKS IN BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL LEVEL?

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Outline

Part I:

About Mental Health Europe

Part II:

National Focal Points

Part III:

The Work of the National Focal Point in Austria

Part IV:

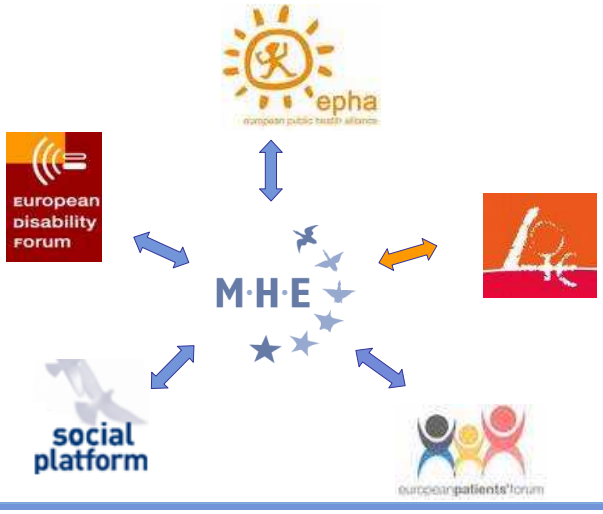
Workshop - Questions

Mental Health Europe (MHE)

A European non-governmental organisation committed to:

- the promotion of positive mental health and well-being
- the prevention of mental distress
- the improvement of care
- advocacy for social inclusion
- protection of human rights for (ex)users of mental health services, their families and carers

MHE affiliation with other European networks



MHE work programme 2008-10
(funded under PROGRESS, DG Employment)

"Working together in the EU – Enhancing communication, collaboration and commitment in the fight against poverty and social exclusion of people with mental health problems"

Key objectives

- Develop and strengthen MHE's activities and that of its member organisations, including (ex)users of mental health services, to ***inform and influence employment and social policy at the local, national, regional and European level***
- ***Actively participate and effectively contribute*** to the development, implementation and monitoring of the ***National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion,*** and in particular the ***National Action Plans against Poverty and Social Exclusion***
- ***Build the capacity of MHE members and empower (ex)users of mental health services*** to become involved in activities aimed at reinforcing the social dimension of the renewed Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs at the local and national level.

MHE Annual Work Programme 2009 - GOAL

"… to develop and strengthen MHE's capacities and that of its member organisations, including people with mental health problems, who are at risk of poverty and social exclusion, to inform and influence employment and social policy and processes at the local, national, regional and European level with a view to better reflecting the needs of people with mental health problems."

Annual Theme 2009: "Active Inclusion for people with (a history of) mental health problems"

More information on Mental Health Europe:

www.mhe-sme.org

NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS (1/7)

What are the MHE National Focal Points?

- New form of information exchange and consultation
- Set up in 2008
- Representative from one of MHE's member organisations in a given country
- Appointed for 2 years, rotation system suggested (can be handled flexible according to specific needs)
- Intermediary between MHE and its national and local member organisations

NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS (2/7)

Objectives of National Focal Points

- Close contact with MHE on the one hand and with all MHE members in their country on the other hand
- Enhanced and intensified flow of information on EU policies and processes
- Ensure that MHE members, including people with mental health problems, are informed, at all times, about the relevant EU policies and processes and have the capacity to express themselves and to act, at the local, national and regional level, with a view to influencing the policy agenda
- To increase the knowledge of MHE members about EU policies and processes around the review of renewed Lisbon Strategy

NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS (3/7)

Role as intermediaries, in cases where:

- Information from the European level needs to be disseminated at the national, regional and local level:

  → Ensure that the information reaches all MHE members and other stakeholders and interested parties in the country

- 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

  → Ensure a more efficient way in acting upon initiatives and requests for information from the European level

NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS (4/7)

Tasks

- Be in continuous contact with all MHE members in a country – and possibly with other stakeholders – through an e-mail distribution list (and possibly through meetings)
- To help with the dissemination of information coming from MHE – about EU initiatives, actions, consultations, events, etc. at the local, regional and national level through the e-mail distribution list, and if possible to provide a short summary translation of the material to be disseminated
- To send back input gathered from MHE members, and possibly other stakeholders, from the local/ regional/ national level to MHE
- Compile an annual report on their activities

NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS (5/7)

Activities in 2008

- Consultation on the draft of the Active Inclusion Recommendation
- Lobbying their respective governments in the preparation process of the National Strategic Reports 2008-2010
- Consultation about mental health issues in the NSRs 2008-2010
- Disseminate relevant information on EU policies, translation of documents into the respective national language where considered appropriate and necessary

NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS (6/7)

Targeted training

- One training session per year
- Capture and communicate the voices and needs of people with mental health problems
- Measures and strategies to promote mental health and well-being and the social inclusion of people with mental health problems from the local/ regional/ national level to the European level

NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS (7/7)

How does MHE support the National Focal Points?

- Provide a list of all MHE members in the respective country
- Provide a list of MEPs who are active in the field of health, social affairs and human rights, so that they can easily be contacted when appropriate
- Preparation of all materials for dissemination
- Training

THE WORK OF THE NFP IN AUSTRIA

pro mente austria

austrian umbrella organisation of

associations and societies active in the field of mental and social health

- **19 member organisations in 9 federal countries**
  achieving services for people suffering on mental health problems in local and regional institutions (counseling, housing, employment/work, leisure time-activities, self-help groups, etc)
- **approximately 30.000 people/year receive support**
- **education and training for employees and for public**
- **information (monthly NL and quarterly NP)**
- **exchange (bi-annual meetings of managing directors; working groups; task-forces;etc.)**
- **networking on national and international level**

WORKSHOP

What is the role of European NGO networks in bridging the gap between European and national levels?

WORKSHOP - QUESTIONS

a) MHE National Focal Points:

- Which elements can be used by other social NGOs?
- Where are the advantages and limits of "National Focal Points"?
- How does this model help to advance civil dialogue at national level and how does it "empower" national members to work with information from European level and to feed back information, opinions, requests, etc. to the European level?

WORKSHOP - QUESTIONS

b) Civil Dialogue in Central and Eastern Europe

- What are the specific needs and challenges?
- Which elements work well?
- What could be learnt from these countries' experiences?
- How can we strengthen the representation of organisations from these countries at European level and in European debates?

WORKSHOP - QUESTIONS

c) Which role for European networks in view of capacity-building and “transporting back” information, opinions and requests from national members to the European arena?

d) What are our expectations vis-à-vis European institutions, in particular the European Commission and the European Parliament (and possibly also: European Economic and Social Committee; Committee of the Regions)?

Useful links:

- European Commission’s website on mental health: http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/mental/mental_health_en.htm
- European Commission DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities: http://ec.europa.eu/social/
- Website on the European Pact on mental health and wellbeing: http://ec-mental-health-process.net/index.html
- MHE policy position on promoting mental wellbeing in employment: www.mhe-sme.org/en/publications/mhe-position-papers.html

For further information

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