



MENTAL HEALTH EUROPE – SANTE MENTALE EUROPE aisbl
Boulevard Clovis 7, B-1000 Brussels
Tel +32 2 280 04 68 - Fax +32 2 280 16 04
Email: info@mhe-sme.org
www.mhe-sme.org

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Brussels, 3 April 2009

Mental Health Europe calls on the European Parliament to adopt a strong non-discrimination legislation to fight social and health inequalities

Ahead of the European Parliament Plenary Session on April 2009, Mental Health Europe (MHE) called upon the Members of the European Parliament's European People's Party to adopt the Report on the non-discrimination directive.

At the European Parliament Plenary session of 2 April, the MEPs voted for the adoption of the Report on the **proposal for a Council directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment** between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (the 'Buitenweg report').

MHE is happy with the results of this vote and welcomes MEPs intention to further protect citizens against discrimination beyond employment.

Right before the final vote took place, MHE and other organisations active in the field of non-discrimination were informed that the **amendment 81** tabled by the EPP-ED group (European People's Party of the European Parliament) called for the rejection of the report in plenary. In reaction to that, MHE sent a letter to the EPP-ED group's members to make them aware of the important consequences that a vote against the Buitenweg report could bring.

Discrimination is a concern for people with mental health problems. Evidence¹ shows that there are strongly negative attitudes towards people with mental health problems: in particular there is an inaccurate view that they represent a danger to the community, a view strongly reinforced in the media. Negative attitudes are not only found among the general public and media, but even among mental health professionals.

Despite some anti-discrimination legislation at EU level exist, persons with mental health problems are excluded from the benefits of such legislations. This is due to the difficult acknowledgment that mental health problems can lead to substantial and long-term disability (psycho-social disability or impairment according to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities).

In its letter, MHE underlined the fact that the current draft Directive as amended by Buitenweg report has a potential to improve the situation as it addresses mental health too. Moreover, MHE stressed that the directive proposal and its planned amendments are in line with the UN Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities, which is expected to be adopted at EU level. Therefore, MHE urged the European Parliament to adopt the proposed directive in compliance with the UN Convention and to use the directive proposal as a key legislative instrument to implement the international treaty.

¹ See research paper 'Countering the stigmatisation and discrimination of people with mental health problems in Europe': http://www.ec-mental-health-process.net/pdf/stigma_paper_en.pdf



MENTAL HEALTH EUROPE – SANTE MENTALE EUROPE aisbl
Boulevard Clovis 7, B-1000 Brussels
Tel +32 2 280 04 68 - Fax +32 2 280 16 04
Email: info@mhe-sme.org
www.mhe-sme.org

For further information:

*Contact the Mental Health Europe Secretariat
Email info@mhe-sme.org, Tel. +32 2 280 04 68*

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