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PRESS RELEASE

MHE response to the Commission communication on health services

Mental Health Europe (MHE) responded to the Commission consultation on health services by contributing to the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) and European Patients Forum (EPF)'s responses submitted to the Commission on 30 January 2007.

Mental Health Europe's key comments to the communication:

- MHE calls for health service organisation to be based on **principles** of accessibility, coordinated care, continuity of care, effectiveness, equity and respect for human rights.
- MHE urges the **mental health and well-being dimension** of patients' mobility to be taken into account. Information provided by health services shall be accurate, reliable, and "handled with care". Providing misleading or incomplete information as well as communicating it poorly can negatively affect patients' mental health. In particular, the information provided should avoid generating unrealistic expectations or false beliefs about patient's own health, treatment and care. Evidence shows that patients having realistic expectations are likely to cope better with their own health problems. Consequently, it is essential that provision of information leads to shared expectations between professionals and patients.
- MHE believes that the patients' **autonomy and freedom of choice** must be respected. Patients should be supplied with useful information enabling them to make their own judgments both on the health treatment and on their health status. The needs and opinions of the patients should be taken into account. The involvement of consumer and family organizations in service planning and delivery should be encouraged and increased.
- MHE makes a plea for the establishment of a **Community framework to support the provision of mental health services**. In several Member States the process of deinstitutionalisation has led to a significant reduction in the number of mental health hospitals, and to a consequent increase in the demand for community-based mental health services. Experience shows that the provision of these services has been inadequate and that access to these services has been uneven. Action at the EU level is therefore needed to put emphasis on developing community mental health care services and coordinate them with general health services. Such an action will facilitate the access to mental health services and reduce the stigma associated with seeking help from stand-alone mental health professionals.

For more information contact the MHE Secretariat, at info@mhe-sme.org. To read the EPHA and EPF's responses go to www.eph.org and <http://www.eu-patient.eu/>

Mental Health Europe - Santé Mentale Europe is a European non-governmental organisation committed to the promotion of positive mental health, prevention of mental distress and protection of human rights for users and ex-users of mental health services, their families and carers.