



Recommendations for Better Mental Health in Europe

- **Experts support urgent call for a European Strategy on Mental Health**

European Health Forum Gastein, Austria, 2007. The European Commission today participated in discussions about a series of recommendations for promoting mental health and reducing the burden of mental illness at the *'Future for Mental Health in Europe'* workshop at the European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG).

The workshop supported by the NGO European Federation of Associations of Families of People with Mental Illness (EUFAMI), GAMIAN-Europe and AstraZeneca was hosted at the 10th European Health Forum Gastein being held from 3 to 6 October 2007. Experts from across the mental health spectrum convened to examine the challenges in ensuring mental health in the population and in addressing mental ill health.

Speaking at the workshop on *'Creating an EU Strategy in Mental Health'*, Michael Huebel, head of the Health Determinants unit of the DG SANCO of the European Commission said, "We wish to support governments and other stakeholders in their increasing efforts to promote mental well-being, to prevent mental ill health, and to tackle its causes. There is also a need to defeat the stigma so often associated in this area. Today's forum provides an important platform to communicate our long-term commitment to such action." The Commission is due to publish a document announcing future actions on mental health.

Diseases attributable to mental and brain disorder are expected to rise to 15 percent.

Mental ill health – which includes mental health problems and strain, impaired functioning associated with distress, symptoms, and diagnosable mental disorders, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and depression – contribute heavily to the burden of ill health in Europe with one in four families having at least one member with a mental disorder.⁽¹⁾ Projections from 1990 to 2020 suggest that the portion of the global burden of disease attributable to mental and brain disorders will rise to 15 percent.⁽²⁾ The most common forms of mental ill health in the EU are anxiety disorders and depression. By the year 2020, depression is expected to be the highest ranking cause of disease in the developed world.⁽³⁾ Mental ill health costs the EU an estimated 3 percent - 4 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), a tool used to outline the cost to the EU economy.

The workshop was chaired by John Bowis MEP, Rapporteur for European Parliament's response to the Green Paper who said today, "Not only is it important to understand the status and determinants of mental health in Europe, but it is also critical for us now to establish and implement a mental health strategy across Europe at grass roots level."

Mr Michael Grinter, Self-Management Administrator, (MDF - The Bipolar Organization), UK, reflected on the reality of living with mental illness while Rodney Elgie, Executive Director of GAMIAN-Europe, highlighted the stigma, discrimination and social exclusion experienced by sufferers of mental illness and the importance of promoting patient rights and dignity through patient empowerment and choice at all levels such as treatment, mental health services, work and housing.

Workshop 4: Mental Health

The workshop brought together experts from across the mental health spectrum. Other speakers included Professor Jan Scott, Institute of Psychiatry, London, UK, David McDaid, Research Fellow, London School of Economics, UK and Kevin Jones, Secretary General EUFAMI.

As every year, the World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH) will be hosting World Mental Health Day (WMHD) on 10 October 2007. This year, WMHD is titled: “Mental Health in a Changing World: The Impact of Culture and Diversity” and will focus on cultural and social differences and how they can influence many aspects of mental health. The WFMH will host a media event in Washington on 10 October.

For further details visit: <http://www.wfmh.com/index.html>.

Further information:

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Additional press information on the EHFG and pictures can be found at www.ehfg.org

Notes to Editor

- In 2005 the European Commission launched a Green Paper on 'Promoting the Mental Health of the Population' which marked the beginning of an extensive consultation to develop an EU strategy on mental health. The document outlined the relevance of mental health for some of the EU's strategic policy objectives, proposes the development of a strategy on mental health at Community-level and brought forward possible priorities and suggestions for actions. The consultation period ended in May 2006 and in December 2006 the European Commission issued a report on the responses to the Green Paper (http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/mental/green_paper/mentalgp_report.pdf).
- To access the Green paper:
http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/mental/green_paper/mental_gp_en.pdf
- Eleven per cent of the population experience mental disorders. Each year, there are about 90,000 deaths from mental and behavioural disorders and 60,000 from suicide.
- Mental illness affects one in four (132.4 million) Europeans every year
- Disadvantaged groups face a greater risk of mental illness. People with mental disorders may face stigma, discrimination and social exclusion.

About EUFAMI

EUFAMI, founded in 1992 and based in Belgium, is the European Federation of Associations of Families of People with mental illness and represents the voice of families and carers at the European level. It has 50 member associations from 28 countries across Europe. A founding principle of

Workshop 4: Mental Health

EUFAMI is that the rights of families as a group must be established and recognised. EUFAMI is committed to work for the improvement of care and welfare for people affected by mental illness.

About GAMIAN

GAMIAN Europe is an international, non-profit, federation comprising users and consumers, family members, carers, health care professionals, representatives of government bodies and agencies, and other concerned parties who support or are interested in issues affecting those who suffer from a mental illness. GAMIAN Europe encourages and promotes information, education and awareness on current knowledge of the treatment and support available to those affected by mental illness such as bipolar disorder having regard to the latest evidence based material.

About AstraZeneca

AstraZeneca is a major international healthcare business engaged in the research, development, manufacture and marketing of prescription pharmaceuticals and the supply of healthcare services. It is one of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies with healthcare sales of USD 26.47 billion and leading positions in sales of gastrointestinal, cardiovascular, neuroscience, respiratory, oncology and infection products. AstraZeneca is listed in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (Global) as well as the FTSE4Good Index.

For more information about AstraZeneca, please visit: <http://www.astrazeneca.com>
AstraZeneca Press Office: <http://www.astrazenecapressoffice.com>

References

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2. World Health Organization. Mental Health: Responding to the Call to Action. WHO, 2002.
3. European Commission Green Paper. Improving the mental health of the population: Towards a strategy on mental health for the European Union, 2005. Last accessed August 2007 at http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/mental/green_paper/mental_gp_en.pdf

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