

## **Comments on the Green Paper**

Improving the mental health of the population: Towards a strategy on mental health for the European Union.

---

Mgr. Pavel Novák

### **Fokus – Association for Mental Health Care**

Dolákova 24, 181 00 Prague 8

Czech Republic

[www.fokus-cr.cz](http://www.fokus-cr.cz)

MUDr. Lenka Vachková

### **Association of Community Services in Mental Health Care**

Na Maninách 38

170 00, Prague 7

Andrea Studihradová

### **Czech Association for Mental Health**

Jelení 9, Prague 1, 118 00

Czech Republic

[www.capz.cz](http://www.capz.cz)

Mgr. Barbora Wenigová

### **Centre for Mental Health Care Development**

Na Maninách 38

170 00, Prague 7

[www.cmhcd.cz](http://www.cmhcd.cz)

We very much welcome the launch of the Green Paper for mental health area. We absolutely agree with the intention to stimulate a debate with European institutions, governments, health professionals, care providers and also users and user organisations about the relevance of mental health.

A comprehensive EU-strategy on mental health can be very useful especially if it is specific enough to stimulate concrete changes. We are glad that the Green Paper refers to Mental Health Declaration for Europe, Helsinki (January, 2005), which we account to be a very transparent and understandable document.

Currently we are in the Czech Republic in a situation when a debate about the whole health system is running and it has become one of the major political issues now before the elections to the parliament. Topics like financing from public sources, organisation of compulsory insurance, ownership of hospitals are widely discussed. At the same time we have underdeveloped community care for people with mental health problems and there is a strong lobby of those who insist that care in big mental health institutions should be the only effective way of helping people with mental disorders.

Even if this is against the experience and evidence of most European countries where deinstitutionalisation took place, big mental hospitals have political support and reforms in this field have stopped. The Concept of the Psychiatry Care (1998)

where transformation of care towards community was anchored has never been realised.

Even the scarce community facilities for people with mental health problems seem to be underfinanced and endangered in existence.

We understand deinstitutionalisation and founding of coordinated regional systems of health-social community services to be prior in the mental health field in our country. We insist that people with serious mental disorders should have right to access to effective care.

We are aware that national health and social care systems are not in the competence of EU. At the same time it is the reform of care for people with mental health problems that we see as a big topic, a field in which examples, experience and political support could be shared between old and new countries. Further research is necessary to bring evidence of the most effective community care models in local settings.

In light of these facts we suggest putting more attention to these points in the future EU-strategy:

### **3 - Improve the quality of life of people with mental illness or disability through social inclusion and protection of their rights and dignity**

We recommend these initiatives on European community level:

- ❑ Good practice in policy – how to implement legislation, how to reform mental health care.
- ❑ Monitoring of human rights in EU countries – in psychiatric hospitals, in social institutions – (involuntary treatment, detention, conditions in hospitals and social institutions, etc (problems with cage beds in the Czech Republic)
- ❑ Good practice of user involvement in mental health care and mental health policy
- ❑ Co-operation in the process of change (mental health care) – partnership (users, carers, providers, NGOs, local, state authority, human rights NGOs) – making use of the White Paper – Good practice of European Governance.
- ❑ Consultations and financial support of the deinstitutionalisation process by the bridging funds to the community service providers (by European social fund)
- ❑ Monitoring of how the Action Plan for Europe adopted in Helsinki in January 2005 is implemented in EU members with focus on the process of deinstitutionalisation.

### **4 – Develop a mental health information, research and knowledge system for the EU**

This paper represents the views of its author on the subject. These views have not been adopted or in any way approved by the Commission and should not be relied upon as a statement of the Commission's or Health & Consumer Protection DG's views. The European Commission does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this paper, nor does it accept responsibility for any use made thereof.