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EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION
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Brussels, 30 May 2006
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EEA EFTA COMMENTS ON THE COMMISSION GREEN PAPER ON
PROMOTING THE MENTAL HEALTH OF THE POPULATION.
TOWARDS A STRATEGY ON MENTAL HEALTH
FOR THE EU (COM(2005)484)

Dear Mr Ryan,

I have the pleasure of submitting the EEA EFTA comments on the Commission's Green Paper on Promoting the Mental Health of the Population towards a Strategy on Mental Health for the EU.

As we welcome the proposal, we would once again like to express our satisfaction with the consultation process and look forward to continuing our co-operation in this area.

Yours sincerely,

INFO	ACTION	PP
ADMINISTRATION		
ADDICTION		
- 7 JUN 2006		
POSITIVE HEALTH		
SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL		
SANCO/C14		

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CC: Mr Matthias Brinkmann, European Commission, DG RELEX

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA**STANDING COMMITTEE
OF THE EFTA STATES**

Brussels, 18 May 2006
Ref. No. 1066253

WORKING GROUP ON PUBLIC HEALTH**EEA EFTA COMMENTS ON THE COMMISSION GREEN PAPER ON
PROMOTING THE MENTAL HEALTH OF THE POPULATION.
TOWARDS A STRATEGY ON MENTAL HEALTH
FOR THE EU (COM(2005)484****EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The EEA EFTA States welcome the Commission's Green Paper on mental health and believe it can be an important contribution towards a coherent strategy at European Level. The work undertaken by the Commission and the open process carried out during its preparatory phase are very much appreciated by the EEA EFTA States. The need to raise the issue of mental health on the European agenda is strongly acknowledged by the EEA EFTA States, and the efforts of both the European Commission and WHO in this respect is fully supported. The EEA EFTA States believe that the perception of the mastering of life based on personal resources is the primary goal of all mental health services; the perspective and experience of users and carers as a basis for treatment and the development of services; and the need of evidence based activity within the mental health sector should be emphasised in further work on the EU strategy. As full participants in the Public Health Programme, the EEA EFTA States look forward to taking an active part in the follow-up to the Green Paper.

I INTRODUCTION

The EEA EFTA States welcome the Green Paper on "Promoting the mental health of the population towards a strategy on mental health for the EU" as presented by the Commission on 17 October 2005¹. The Green paper addresses important issues relating to the increase in the demand for mental health services both at national and European levels.

The EEA EFTA States recognise the importance of an open dialogue at European level to share experiences and to identify best practices, and to agree on actions to tackle common problems. Reviewing other strategies and extending the knowledge base through learning

¹ COM(2005)484

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from experiences across Europe is necessary in order to achieve the goals set at national level.

It is hoped that this comprehensive consultation process secures sufficient involvement from all relevant parties. The EEA EFTA States will use the opportunity to comment upon the Green Paper and to put an emphasis on some of the issues raised during this process.

II GENERAL COMMENTS

The EEA EFTA States would like to first of all underline the open and positive process the Commission has carried out during the preparation of the Green Paper. The Green Paper launches closer cooperation between the Members of the EU in the field of Public Health. The development of a European strategy to promote mental health constitutes an important step towards putting mental ill health on the European agenda, and will not only be of concern to the 25 Member States, but will also influence all European countries in developing their national policies in this field.

In Norway, work is presently being undertaken on the implementation of the National Mental Health Programme 1999-2008. This programme calls for a major increase in the funding of mental health related services, a reorganisation of the services and the introduction of new legislation. The sharing of practices in the health field is incremental in improving policy both at national and European level.

III SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Concerning the questions listed under part 8 in the Green Paper, "next steps", the EEA EFTA States would like to make the following comments:

- (1) *How relevant is the mental health of the population for the EU's strategic policy objectives?*
A state of good mental health in the population obviously contributes positively to the strategic policy objectives of the EU and investment in mental health should be regarded as a productive factor for the whole EU and EEA area. Hence, it is not only a question of being relevant, but the necessity to come up with measures that counter the tendency of an increase in mental health problems for the EU's citizens is fully in line with the European tradition of solidarity and social justice.
- (2) *Would the development of a comprehensive EU-strategy on mental health add value to the existing and envisaged actions and does section 5 propose adequate priorities?*
The EEA EFTA States support the proposed four main aspects of an EU strategy on mental health, and the initiatives listed under each aspect. In their opinion, section 5 does propose adequate priorities at EU level.

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The EEA EFTA States furthermore believe that the initiatives proposed in sections 6 and 7 seem appropriate for the purposes listed by the Commission. In addition, The EEA EFTA States would like to suggest that the following three perspectives be emphasised in the follow-up to the strategy – based on positive experiences at national level and in accordance with the WHO Helsinki Declaration:

1. The mastering of life based on personal resources as the primary goal of all mental health services;
2. The perspective and experience of users and carers as a basis for treatment and the development of services;
3. The need of evidence based activity within the mental health sector.

* * * * *

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.