EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mental health is everyone's concern

The European Mental Health Agenda process was initiated in 1995. Since then, this process has encompassed a wide range of activities aiming to raise the value and visibility to mental health in the European context. As a result of this, some topics that have been brought up during this process are already becoming quite deeply rooted in the European way of thinking. For example, the importance of regarding mental health as a broad concept that includes both positive and negative aspects has been highlighted, and the slogan 'There Is No Health Without Mental Health' has been strongly advocated such that it has become well-known throughout Europe.

Through these and a large number of related activities the scope of mental health action has also been widened to cover human rights and promotive, preventive and curative approaches, as well as prevention of mortality. This is crucial in building alliances with stakeholders in different fields in order to smoothen the way for integrating mental health in all relevant policies, which is a vital future priority.

Knowledge and information as the currency of public discourse

Feasible and useful indicators to monitor the state of mental health at the population level need to be urgently developed and implemented. Therefore, in answer to this need, a comprehensive proposal for a valid set of mental health indicators was presented in this seminar.

Dissemination of information is becoming more important as it seems obvious that knowledge and information are the currency of public discourse. Therefore, the establishment of permanent and effective feedback loops between the various actors should be facilitated. Any information on mental health has to be formulated and disseminated in consonance with the legitimacy and logic of political life so that it can be used at the political level.

Naturally, there is a need for strong political commitment and for the user organisations to give a push to the politicians. Furthermore, it is unrealistic to expect significant progress to be realised overnight. A rationale exists, however, for comparing investments made in mental health against the costs – direct and indirect – of not making such investments.

There are good possibilities for creating an intelligent interface within the mental health community with the opportunities provided by the information society. Such a structure could be initiated from the mental health field. This opportunity should be vigorously pursued.

Mental health on the global agenda

Mental health issues are challenges not only in the EU but all over the world. There is an urgent need for thinking more widely and more globally. In many cases mental health is not a priority in health service systems and mental health issues are not much discussed in public. Unfortunately, when they are, they are mainly seen in a negative, tragic or scandalous light. There are also a
number of risk groups to which we need to pay more attention.

The global mental health agenda, social capital and the need for global governance in environmental, health and social policies were among the themes that arose in the presentations and discussions of this seminar. Huge challenges lie ahead concerning health monitoring, and concerning the production and dissemination of better information, just to name a few. That is why efforts must be put into building capacities, advancing R&D activities and developing improved ways to set priorities in the field of mental health. Moreover, the role of the consumer movement needs to be that of a meaningful participant, and close collaboration between the European Union and the WHO, as well as with other relevant stakeholders, needs to be maintained.

The concept of mental health impact assessment (MHIA) was heavily discussed in the seminar. There arose a strong consensus that at the moment, the methodology for conducting such assessments is not good enough: it needs to be carefully considered for whom MHIA should eventually be conducted and a more systematic approach and iterative processes should be developed.

**Keep the momentum**

Mental health is on the European agenda. Mental health is also on the agenda in Canada, New Zealand, in the United States and elsewhere. Today, mental health is seriously considered and supported by the activities of the European Commission and the World Health Organization: for example, in the new EC action plan in the field of public health, in the various events geared to World Health Day and in the World Health Report on Mental Health for 2001. Moreover, non-governmental organisations are increasingly concerned with mental health issues and mental health is advocated in the European Parliament.

This crucial momentum must not be lost.
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