

Patricia Reilly

Cabinet, Commissioner Máire Geoghan Quinn.

31 May University of Limerick.

Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank the Honourable Member of Parliament Nessa Childers, the University of Limerick and the Network for Psychotherapeutic Care in Europe (NPCE) for having invited the Commission to this very important event, held under the auspices of the Irish Presidency of the Council.

The EU and mental health

With **around 38% of the EU population** suffering from a mental disorder, **more than 58,000 suicides** committed per year and costs reaching more than **€113 billion** in Europe in 2010, improving mental health research is indeed one of the most pressing societal challenges for the European Union.

As a response to these dramatic figures and to commit to the World Health Organisation "Mental health declaration for Europe", the Commission launched, in June 2008, the "**European Pact for Mental Health and Well-Being**", which was supported by the European Parliament's Resolution on mental health of 2009.

While recognising that the primary responsibility for action in this area rests with Member States, the Pact built on the EU's potential to inform, promote best practice and encourage actions by Member States and stakeholders and help address common challenges and tackle health inequalities.

Mental health and youth, prevention of depression and suicide, mental health in older people, stigma and exclusion, and mental health in the workplace were the five areas of action.

The Council Conclusions of 2011 on the "Mental Health Pact, results and future actions" acknowledged the EU Pact's impact through the provision **of a coordinated framework for Member States' exchanges and best practices and called for reinforced efforts** in this area

including the setting up of a '**Joint Action on Mental Health and Well-being**' under the EU Public Health Programme 2008-2013.

Up and running **since January 2013 and bringing together 45 partners from 27 Member States** under the coordination of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, the Joint Action is providing a reinforced platform for exchange of views, cooperation and coordination between Member States.

Mental health and wellbeing, prevention of mental disorders and the improvement of care and social inclusion of people with mental health problems in Europe are the drivers of this effort.

Mental well-being is an essential constituent of health and quality of life, and a prerequisite for the ability to learn, work and contribute to social life.

By providing the scientific evidence base needed to develop effective approaches to mental well-being and foster efficient prevention, diagnosis and treatment strategies for mental and neurological disorders research and innovation will help Member States ti

develop health policies to maximise European populations' health, wealth and happiness.

Indeed, the 7th Framework Programme for Research – FP7 – provided unprecedented support to mental and neurological disorders research.

Close to €2.0 billion has been allocated to this area since 2007, and a further €150M will be added when the last calls are finalised.

Within this, some **€280 million has been devoted to mental health and neuropsychiatric diseases research**, directly implementing the 'European Pact for Mental Health and Well-Being'. Furthermore **€74 million was dedicated to research on brain healthcare with a view to translating research results** into health policies as well as assessing the most efficient healthcare strategies in Europe.

The projects address **a wide range of subjects. Besides schizophrenia, autism and mood disorders**, the main supported areas of pre-clinical and clinical

research focused on anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and stress, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders (ADHD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorders (OCD), conduct disorders, addiction, eating disorders and Tourette's syndrome.

For instance, the **ROAMER project** has gathered an international consortium of renowned mental health experts to establish a coordinated Roadmap for the promotion and integration of mental health and well-being research across Europe. One of their main areas of focus is developing a methodology to identify evidence-based psychological methods and their application in routine care.

Depression and suicidality are two important and largely overlapping public health problems in Europe and of course **suicide** remains a significant cause of premature death. Designing appropriate prevention strategies is of paramount importance.

The **PREDI-NU project**, coordinated by the **Irish National Suicide Research Foundation**, aims at developing evidence-based internet-based guided self-

management tool with a view to increase depression awareness.

Such an approach, which would also match young peoples' needs, could be a practical way of providing ready access to effective psychosocial interventions for mild depression and have potential to impact on suicidal thoughts and behaviours.

The project **OSPI-EUROPE** - Optimising Suicide Prevention Programmes and their Implementation – , gathering 14 European countries –including the IE NSRF - aims to review and evaluate current strategies for suicide prevention, and to combine the strategies for which evidence is available to develop an optimised multifaceted suicide prevention intervention.

Finally, the project **PROMISE** is successfully developing training guidelines and resources on mental health promotion for healthcare professionals. This includes specific activities for psychologists.

FP7 has also innovated by providing unique public-private collaborations through the Innovative Medicines Initiative Joint Undertaking (IMI), a 1 billion euro initiative

set up between the European Commission and the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations with a view to developing better and safer therapies.

Brain research benefits directly from IMI, in particular in the areas of research on schizophrenia, depression, pain, Alzheimer's and autism, where more than €100 million has been committed by FP7 and pharmaceutical companies.

Those commitments made by the pharmaceutical industry under the IMI umbrella are encouraging signs at a time when companies have a tendency to down-scale their central nervous system research facilities.

The European Month of the Brain

This unique commitment of FP7 to brain research and the necessity to further sharpen new knowledge and innovation in brain research decided the Commission to declare May 2013 'European Month of the Brain'.

The aim of the 'European Month of the Brain' is to provide a framework to address brain research and healthcare issues.

In particular, its goals were to:

- **Showcase EU-supported achievements** in the area of brain research and healthcare;
- Outline **future research and policy lines** in this area;
- Mobilise Member States and Associated Countries **to better coordinate and optimise resources** allocated to brain research and healthcare;
- **Raise awareness** among the public, including **lifting taboos** associated with brain health issues.

In my view, it is particularly important that the European Month of the Brain is an initiative open to any stakeholder who wants to organise a specific event raising awareness on brain research and healthcare issues.

In this regard, participation of stakeholders is particularly encouraging. Indeed, besides the events organised by

the European Institutions, the European Month of the Brain has mobilised more than 50 events organised in about 20 Member States and associated countries, 10 of these in Ireland alone, proving the great interest in this area.

As one of the main elements of the Month of the Brain the European Commission organised the conference 'European Brain Research: successes and next challenges', which took place in Brussels on 14 May.

Several exciting and successful examples out of the more than 1200 brain research projects funded by the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Development (FP7) were presented.

In addition, the conference 'Healthy Brain: Healthy Europe - A new horizon for brain research and healthcare in Europe', jointly organised by the Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU (Health Research Board, on behalf of the Irish Department of Health) took place in Dublin earlier this week (27 - 28 May). The Conference aimed at identifying needs and gaps and providing recommendations for further action in this field.

But the European Month of the Brain goes beyond EU activities alone. It is about reflecting on the future of brain research and healthcare all together.

Launch of the Irish National Brain Council.

This month comes at a very good time – it's an opportunity to take stock of what achieved and identify the challenges ahead, at a time FP7 is ending.

Horizon 2020 and its societal challenge approach

The Commission is currently discussing Horizon 2020, the EU's new funding programme for research and innovation, with the European Parliament and the Member States in the European Council.

The close correlation between research, innovation, economic growth and employment is the main reason that the European Commission has proposed to increase the EU's investment in research and innovation to an ambitious figure of some 80 million Euros.

Horizon 2020 is designed to help bridge the gaps between research, the market and societal needs and

constitutes a vital pillar of the Europe 2020 strategy to create a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy and society.

Health and wellbeing for all will be one of the cornerstones of Horizon 2020, which will begin in 2014.

The programme is structured around the **three distinct yet mutually reinforcing priorities of excellent science, industrial leadership and tackling societal challenges.**

One of the major new features of Horizon 2020 is its **challenge-based approach** that concentrates on creating the knowledge and innovation to solve problems, rather than simply investigating them.

"Health, demographic change and wellbeing" is the largest societal challenge addressed by the programme. Big challenges need big means. Therefore it is proposed that €8.5 billion euro be allocated to this theme.

It will help European researchers to take decisive steps towards the development of a comprehensive and coordinated effort on lifelong health and wellbeing

research in Europe, based on initiatives jointly implemented by the EU and its Member States associating the public and private sectors.

Such an encompassing programme **fits the cross-disciplinary nature of mental health research** that you are discussing today.

We need **excellence** in research to improve our understanding of health, diseases, development and ageing. And we need also **its translation into innovative**, scalable and effective products, strategies, and integrated care interventions and services for the benefits of our patients.

Ultimately, we want to contribute to the delivery of personalised healthcare. This includes effective health promotion, which, supported by a robust evidence base and effective surveillance and screening programmes, prevents disease, improves wellbeing and is cost effective.

But it will also mean the need to support, through research and innovation pilots, the wide uptake of

technological, organisational and social innovations empowering citizens of all ages to remain in good health.

Horizon 2020 calls for a new vision of health and wellbeing that emphasises the opportunities as well as the challenges, and that aims for inclusion and full citizenship for all. It will provide you with many opportunities to address the burden posed by mental disorders.