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"Mental health therapy and EU Public health strategy"

Good morning everybody, I will speak briefly and outline European Commission and European Parliament actions on mental health.

I will then hand over to my EU colleague Patricia Reilly who will explain the work of DG Research and innovation, describe Horizon 2020 - the next research and innovation programme, and give examples of research projects into mental health and brain disorders funded by DG Research.

Patricia Reilly is a member of Commissioner Máire Geoghegan-Quinn's cabinet, and also spoke to a wider UL audience yesterday about Horizon 2020.

To give you some background, it was not long ago that the European Union left mental health issues solely to the Members States but there have been some concrete moves at European level.

Following on from the 2006 Bowis report from the European Parliament's Public Health Committee, on which I currently sit, the European Commission launched the "European Pact for Mental Health and Well-being". This Pact called for action in five priority areas, with associated five thematic conferences held around Europe:

1. Prevention of depression and suicide
2. Mental health in youth and education
3. Mental health in workplace settings
4. Mental health of older people
5. Combating stigma and social exclusion T

This was followed by the new EU Joint Action, funded under the EU's budget, which will run from February 2013 until January 2016. This brings together 45 associated and collaborating partners representing 27 EU Member States and associated countries.

It will address:

- Mental health at the work place and in schools
- Promoting action against depression and suicide
- Developing community mental health care and
- Promoting the integration of mental health in all policies

The expected result is a more rigorous and comprehensive knowledge of mental health and well-being situation in the EU and the development of a framework for action endorsed by the member states. If this does not sound extremely concrete, then it is because health issues as we know are mainly a national competency and the EU role is mostly promoting and co-ordinating best practices. But some of us are pushing for more concrete steps let me assure you.

In the Parliament, I am co-chair of the Interest Group on Mental Health, which brings together MEPs dedicated to the issue with other interested groups to advocate the development of sound EU policies. We host regular meetings in the Parliament and invited guest speakers, Commission officials, patient groups, and even the industry now and then, to discuss relevant issues. We then work to advance these issues at EU level. For example, we have had meetings on issues such as depression, active aging, and stigma. As co-chair I raised the issue of mental health also with the Irish Presidency of the Council last January

We urged strong commitment to the Joint Action on Mental Health and Well-being and especially the Joint Action work package on depression, suicide and eHealth. We also urged progress on the training of GPs on mental health issues

and suicide prevention and work on the subject of reimbursement of medicines and psychotherapy. Most recently, and ending just this month is the 'European Month of the Brain', an initiative of the Commission, and Patricia will go into more detail about this event.

However in addition to successfully implementing the EU Mental Health Pact and the Joint Action, it is also time for a legislative proposal on mental health in Europe from the European Commission. The key point the Commission must understand, is that mental health is not just a health issue but also an economic issue. There is a wealth of evidence that shows that family breakdown, serious personal debt, drug and alcohol addiction, failed education, unemployment, dependency and mental health are deeply interconnected. Now, in difficult economic times, is the time to give the mounting numbers facing mental health illness the attention that this situation demands and for us to agitate on their behalf. As a Member of the European Parliament, I will be your ally in that campaign.

I now welcome Patricia Reilly and extend a warm welcome to Patricia and thank her for addressing our conference today.

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