



## Newsletter April 2008

Dear members,

New members and the first steps within the European Union: the most important developments of the last months.

### New Members

The Schweizerische Arbeitsgemeinschaft von Ärzten für Menschen mit Geistiger Behinderung (The Swiss working group of physicians for people with intellectual disability), established at the end of 2007, has decided to become a member of MAMH. We also look forward to the possibility of welcoming some Romanian physicians as new members and a further step forward towards a Europe-wide association.

### The EU and the EASPD

On the 18<sup>th</sup> January we had two meetings in Brussels. The first was with Mr. Johan ten Geuzendam, head of the EC Unit for Integration of People with Disabilities, Directorate-General for Employment, Social affairs and Equal Opportunities. Mr. ten Geuzendam is the successor to Mrs. Wallis Goelen and took up his post at the beginning of January.

Also present was Mrs. Inmaculada Placentia Porrero, deputy head of the Unit Integration of People with Disabilities.

The other meeting was with Mr. Jelle Reynaert, Policy Officer and Mr. Luk Zelderloo, Secretary General of EASPD,

the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities.

Both meetings were very valuable. We got the opportunity to present MAMH as an organisation of doctors who intend to diminish the inequalities in medical care, including mental health care, for people with intellectual disabilities. We could make clear that the starting points of the European Manifesto fit with the ideas of the EU and the EASPD, that all persons should use mainstream health services but that these services at this moment show a lack of knowledge and sometimes even a lack of interest. This situation needs to be changed as a priority but, in addition, specialised health professionals are needed as a back up for mainstream health professionals. We also pointed out the lack of knowledge in caregivers a lack of knowledge that can lead to negative and sometimes dangerous consequences for people with intellectual disabilities when symptoms of illness are not recognised. Morbidity and mortality rates are higher in people with intellectual disabilities, on the one hand as a consequence of their constitution, but on the other resulting from under-diagnosis and misdiagnosis.

We were able to obtain an insight in the organisation of the European Union, and the next step will be to meet the Directorate General for Health and Consumer Affairs (Sanco) and the Disability Intergroup of the European Parliament.

The following is an excerpt from the [Parliament resolution on the situation of people with disabilities in the enlarged European Union: the European Action Plan 2006-2007 \(2006/2105\(INI\)\)](#):

*(The European Parliament) ... welcomes moving away from the institutionalisation of people with disabilities; notes that deinstitutionalisation requires a sufficient level of community-based services of high quality, favouring independent living, the*

*right to assistance, and full participation in society within Member States; calls for special attention to be paid to possible barriers to access to such services caused by charging policies and to support the principle of **European** universal access; recommends that the governments of the Member States focus current support on services directed towards encouraging the integration into society and employment of people with disabilities; stresses the need to strengthen public policies to ensure that equal rights exist in practice; encourages the Commission to develop and/or to recognise European indicators of quality for social services;*

Medical care is not specifically noted in this resolution, but that “deinstitutionalisation requires a sufficient level of community based services of high quality..” is consistent with the content of our “European Manifesto, Basic Standards of Health Care for People with Intellectual Disabilities” (Rotterdam, November 2003).

## **2008 Conference**

At the MAMH Board Meeting in Potsdam, members said that they would like to hold a conference in Liverpool, England, in 2008. UK member Dr Roger Banks is currently working with the Education and Training Centre of the Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCPsych) to set up a conference in collaboration with MAMH and with ESCAP (European Society for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry). Professor Sue Bailey, current Registrar of the RCPsych and a Child and Adolescent Forensic Psychiatrist is currently the board secretary of ESCAP and this organisation has recently highlighted the lack of training in learning disability for child and adolescent psychiatrists in Europe. We therefore hope to be able to stage a conference that will focus on the physical and mental health needs of children and adolescents with learning disabilities and that be of interest to a

broad range of clinicians who work with these children. The conference is likely to take place in November and more information will be made available as soon as possible. Any member of MAMH who wishes to contribute through oral or poster presentations to the conference are encouraged to contact Roger Banks at [rbanks@rcpsych.ac.uk](mailto:rbanks@rcpsych.ac.uk) .

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