



MENTAL HEALTH  
KEEP TALKING ABOUT IT

# Newsletter GAMIAN-Europe

January 2016

ISSUE 2015 - 4

Dear reader,



Despite the fact that 2016 is not so 'new' anymore, we would like to wish you all a very happy and healthy 2016.

It goes without saying that

GAMIAN-Europe members fully experience the important role of mental health for their well-being and quality of life, in addition to physical conditions. To be happy at a personal level and successful in professional activities is not always that easy when suffering from mental health problems. Therefore, we at GAMIAN-Europe will do whatever we can to continue our efforts to raise awareness of mental health and its impact, advocate for patients' rights and combat the stigma attached to mental health problems.

**We wish you and your family a "Healthy New Year".**

*The editorial committee.*

**Foreword by Yoram Cohen  
(President)**

It is still not easy for me to follow in the footsteps of our beloved Pedro, after his unexpected and sad passing just a few months ago. And I would like to thank all my friends, all Board members, including Paul Arteel, Christine Marking and Erik Van der Eycken, who support me and enable me to lead our organisation effectively. Over recent years Pedro was in charge of many of our events and Board meetings, including the Budapest and Brussels Conventions (2014 and 2015) and the Serres regional Seminar (2015). He also participated in many other mental health events across Europa, and I now that I have taken over his role, I can experience for myself how active and well-liked he was. He clearly succeeded to develop good connections with other organisations. He was our leader and our friend. I was active as Acting President since Pedro's passing and at the recent GAMIAN-Europe Board meeting. I was confirmed as President of the organisation until

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the next elections in September. So it is now up to me to take over Pedro's role and I will do my very best to continue with the glorious tradition of our unique umbrella organisation. GAMIAN-Europe will continue to act as the voice of the wide variety of mental health patients in Europe. We will keep advocating : **there is no health without mental health!**



*Yoram Cohen*

*President of GAMIAN-Europe*



## GAMIAN-Europe's activities

### Call for membership renewal

Time flies ... February 2016 has already arrived ! We hope that you have started the New Year successfully. If you want to renew your membership for this New Year, **please do so as soon as possible and pay € 150 - if you wait until after April 1<sup>st</sup>, the fee will go up to € 175.**

It is important for us to collect the membership fees in the first quarter of the year. An invoice will be sent to you as soon as the payment has arrived on our bank account:

#### ING Bank

Marnixlaan 24

1000 Brussels

Belgium

(ACCOUNT NUMBER 390-0443843-26 )

IBAN CODE BE 59 3900 4438 4326

BIC CODE BBRUBEBB

**Please let us know if there are any changes in your contact data. You can use the form on the website, click [here](#).**

### A new Executive Director

In November 2015, a GAMIAN-Europe recruitment committee, appointed and approved by the Board, interviewed a number of candidates for the position of Executive Director.



Mr. Nigel Emeka Olisa was finally selected to take up this position on 1 March. With his experience as lead manager at Friends of Europe, Nigel will be able to make a positive and constructive contribution and lead GAMIAN-Europe into a successful future.

Nigel graduated in 2000 as Bachelor of Science for International Relations & Management at the University of Maryland (U.S.).

He has an extensive experience in business development, intelligence gathering, marketing campaigns and information analysis. His in-depth knowledge of the EU institutions and network management capabilities will be an added value in the execution of the different tasks related to his new position.

## The Pedro Montellano Good Practice Award (\*) (in Mental Health)

### Background:

The GAMIAN-Europe Good Practice Award was introduced in 2010 and first presented at the Annual Convention in 2011. Since then, every year, all GAMIAN-Europe members are invited to submit examples of good practice for consideration.

### Aims:

By supporting and publishing all projects, GAMIAN-Europe will contribute to challenge the stigmatisation, exclusion and isolation of people with mental health problems.

### Call for nominations

GAMIAN-Europe invites members to submit projects for the Good Practice Award. This prestigious award aims to recognise the outstanding initiatives and innovative efforts of our members. The award recognises good practice and provides an opportunity to challenge the stigma often associated with mental health issues by highlighting good practices to a wider audience and supporting the exchange of expertise between members. A memorial plaque will be awarded to the winners. [Application form.](#)

***The winner will be announced at the GE General Assembly in September 2016.***

*\* From 2016, the GAMIAN-Europe Good Practice Award will be renamed 'The Pedro Montellano Good Practice Award', in memory of our former President, colleague, friend and patient advocate, who died 2 October, 2015.*

## GAMIAN Europe proceeds its participation in three EC research projects in 2016

With the kick off meetings in January and March 2014, three research projects - MoodFOOD, E-Compared and MasterMind – started their activities. GAMIAN-Europe is involved to ensure the input of patients and is a partner among leading academic project partners. Both for GAMIAN-Europe and for the researchers, this way of involving patients in research projects is a new area of cooperation.





With the recent appointment of Christine Marking and Erik Van der Eycken as research assistants by the Board the tasks of the Executive Director in the projects have been taken over by the two staff members.



The continuation of GAMIAN-Europe's participation is thus ensured for the next years. E-Compared will run until 31 December 2016, MasterMind will end in February 2017 and MoodFOOD will continue until the end of 2018. It is hoped that GAMIAN-Europe will be involved in many more projects. For all details on these projects, click [here](#).

## Upcoming events

### GAMIAN-Europe's Thematic Seminar 'Mental Health and Migration bringing down the barriers'

*Prague (Czech Republic)*  
19 – 20 March 2016

### GAMIAN-Europe's Annual Convention

*Ankara (Turkey)*  
15 – 17 September 2016

### (Joint) meetings of the Interest Group 2016

*European Parliament Brussels (B)*

- April / May
- September
- December

## EU News

by Christine Marking (GAMIAN-Europe EU Liaison)



### 'Carers for people affected by mental health problems

Joint meeting of the Interest Groups on Carers and Mental Health

On 12 January, the European Parliament Interest Group on Carers and the Interest Group on Mental Health, Well-being and Brain Disorders held a joint meeting (organised by GAMIAN-Europe and Eurocarers), addressing the issues faced by carers providing care to people affected by mental health disorders.

Basis for the meeting was EUFAMI's recent survey on this topic, carried out by carried out by LUCAS, the Centre for Care Research and Consultancy of the University of Leuven. This survey, entitled 'Caring4Carers', has a strong

focus on the experiences of carers for persons with severe mental illness and clearly demonstrates the areas where these need support. Background to the survey is the fact that recent reforms in mental health care are seeing a gradual move away from hospital-based to community care; therefore the demands on family carers has increased. Over the past decades there has been some scientific survey-based research data documenting the carer burden. However, the research is limited, not recent and often based on single country examples. 'Caring 4carers' was specifically designed to address this evidence gap and assess the experiences of family carers in caring for a relative with severe mental illness, from an international perspective.



The meeting served to inform participants of the outcome of the EUFAMI survey (by key note speaker Professor Chantal Van Audenhove, LUCAS), hear about the experiences of carers (by Spyros Zorbas, Kinapsi (GR) and John Dunne, Eurocarers) and discuss what the EU level can do to ensure more awareness of this topic and more policy attention, both in existing initiatives as well as in future actions (by Jürgen Schefflein, European Commission, DG Santé).

The meeting was attended by some 40 participants, representing a wide range of stakeholders, and led to a number of practical suggestions for advocacy, including an Own Initiative report on carers and a concrete action plan on health (to ensure proper implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Action on Mental Health which is coming to an end).

A full report of the meeting is available on the [GAMIAN-Europe website](#).



## Health and Safety in the Workplace

A European Parliament report on a Commission proposal addressing health and safety in the workplace was adopted by the European Parliament in November 2015. GAMIAN-Europe has worked with MEPs to ensure that mental health is included in this report, which was very successful: a number of amendments making the link





between physical and mental health and underlining the importance of good mental health at work have been agreed by the MEPs. For the full report, click [here](#)

## Interview with Paul Arteel (former) Executive Director



Contrary to expectations, GAMIAN-Europe's current Executive Director, Paul Arteel, will not fully retire soon. After 6 years and 8 months as Executive Director of our organisation, Paul will be responsible for the induction of the new Executive Director, Nigel Emeka Olisa,

who will take up his post on 1 March 2016.

Paul's commitment to ensure a smooth transition as well as continuity in the activities of GAMIAN-Europe is well appreciated.

Some background information: Paul graduated from the University of Ghent in 1974 as Master in Law Sciences. For some years, he was solicitor at the bar of the Ghent Court of Justice as well as scientific collaborator at the Department of Youth Welfare and Adult Education. At the University of Ghent, he also worked as co-ordinator for the Flemish Association "Child & Violence", in order to combat child abuse.

As Executive Director, Paul gained experience as Director of the Flemish Association for Mental Health and acted as ombudsman in this organisation as well. In Flanders he was initiator of many patient rights projects and anti-stigma campaigns. In 2005 he became active within GAMIAN-Europe; Paul organised the organisation's Convention in 2006 and was elected Secretary-General in 2007. In July 2009 he became Executive Director.

A few weeks before his 'part-time' retirement, we took the opportunity to ask Paul some questions about his past experience as well as his future plans.

### **After your graduation, you immediately became active in social and welfare matters. What were your reasons for doing so?**

I am a product of the sixties, May '68 was during my last college year. Emancipation, participation equality and those sort of principles were key at that time, not to mention the critical view of 'classic' psychiatry and the start of the patients' rights movement.

### **How did you experience the move from a Flemish association to a patient-driven pan-European organisation? What were the most significant differences?**

I worked at the Flemish level for some 20 years (1988-2008) and during this period the patient involvement in this national Mental Health Association was ensured. We

did a lot to combat stigma and to support patients with their complaints and redress.

### **What is for you the most remarkable event or activity during your ten years' career at GAMIAN-Europe?**

In the past ten years the patient involvement in GAMIAN-Europe's governance structures was guaranteed. There was an evolution from supporting and informing local, national patient associations to build a truly patient driven association where patients were no longer those receiving but rather, true actors.

In this period GAMIAN-Europe has become recognized as a strong patient representative and a reliable partner for a number of leading EU-level health and patient organisations as well as the European Union institutions. For instance, the Interest group on Mental Health, Well-being and Brain Disorders is an important platform for communication and action; the involvement in the Joint Action on Mental Health and Well-being gave patients a real voice. With the introduction of the surveys GAMIAN-Europe has created a valuable and informative tool to speak out for its members and other patients.

### **You have been involved in a wide variety of mental health issues and debates over the last two decades. What progress or changes have you noticed?**

The patient has been recognized as an active partner in not only his own health, but also in mental health policy development. However, the battle against stigma is not yet won; we have a long way and tough battles ahead in this respect.

### **You are now approaching your retirement and you are busy with your move to the South of France. What are your plans for the short and the longer term?**

Enjoying everyday life, living the good life: sea, sun, food, wine .....

### **What key message do you have for GAMIAN-Europe's Board, staff and members?**

Keep fighting for the respect of persons with mental health problems, not as a patient but as a citizen, with full capacities to be involved in any decision concerning his/her health and living conditions.

*On behalf of the Editorial Committee, we wish you and Yannik a well-deserved retirement. We are convinced that you both will enjoy the life in Southern France with the sunny weather, the tasty food, the delicious wine and the tranquillity of the region. Above all, we wish both you and Yannik a healthy and happy future life.*

## FOCUS ON 'BALANS' SWEDEN

By Håkan Wingren  
(Board member)



**BALANS** is a national association composed of twelve regional associations, of which LIBRA (member of GAMIAN-Europe) is one. BALANS and their regional associations turn to people who suffer from affective disorder, "burn-out" (chronic fatigue syndrome) or dysthymia (a less severe but sometimes chronic form of depression). BALANS is also a member of National Partnership for Mental Health, which is an umbrella association composed of other national associations dealing with different types of mental diseases. Relatives and patients can, through regional associations get information, advice and assistance as well as get a chance to meet others in similar situations. BALANS organises seminars, lectures, café and theme nights. They have several conversation groups for sufferers and their relatives as well as those together. Because exercise is very healthy, they offer walks for large or small groups.

### Objectives of Balans and their regional associations

- Reach people with depression and / or bipolar disorder and provide support in the association's framework, invite to togetherness within the association.
- Inform the staff at psychiatric hospitals and outpatient clinics, inter alia, their views and wishes regarding care.
- Inform relatives about the possibility to participate in the association's work, and get the support from the association's other members.
- Work to increase knowledge in the community about depression and bipolar diagnoses, thereby reducing misunderstanding, fear and repudiation.
- Create opinion and influence politicians and public authorities.

### Discussion/Conversation groups

BALANS divides the members into groups of younger/older participants with various affective disorders (depression or bipolar disorder) or groups of families who can support each other. Participants meet about 6-8 participants every two weeks, 8 times per semester. In the group they share their experiences and/or listen to each other. They use a discussion method called "The Round" – in which everyone who wants to say something, gets the word. In order to increase security and togetherness to a high useful level in the groups, it is important that anyone who decides to take part comes to the meetings.

### Message to patients and their relatives:

*Become a member and you can influence your and other people's lives!*

### Talk about mental illness It makes a difference

Between 2009 and 2014, Hjärnkoll ("Brain Extrakoll") was a national campaign that has been run by the Agency for Participation and the network organization NSPH (National Collaboration for Mental Health). Since 1 January 2015 the National Association Hjärnkoll has taken over the work to increase awareness and transparency of mental illness and



health. The goal remains the same - that everyone should have the same rights and opportunities regardless of mental functioning.

### Attitude Ambassadors

*Attitude Ambassadors demonstrating for Hjärnkoll in Stockholm*

The most important and continued success factor of the campaign is the active engagement of over 340 engaged knowledgeable, so called **Attitude Ambassadors all over Sweden**, who speak about their own experiences of mental illness. The ambassadors are leading, training, starting discussions, arranging ethics cafes and many more activities - in schools, workplaces, governments, and civil society. They are seen and heard very often in the media - all to show that mental illness is not something to be afraid of. We just have different ways of functioning and we all benefit of that the differences are utilised, both in a human as well as in an economic sense.

### Dare to speak and dare to ask.

When we know more we also dare to ask more. Then we can kill prejudices and break isolation. It leads to better interaction between people, more professional treatment in the health care and less discrimination in society. Anything that can reduce social exclusion and save lives. "We must dare to talk about mental illness", to increase knowledge and deeper understanding of our differences.

Every third person said that he or she cannot imagine working with a person who has mental problems. The problem with this picture is that we are probably already doing it. In Sweden, three out of four have experience of mental illness - either your own or a related party. Yet the silence is compact.

Mental illness is still scary, despite the fact that three out of four people have experience with it. The fear makes it difficult to talk about it openly. Many are afraid of being bullied, discriminated or marginalised. Others are afraid to

say the wrong thing and make mistakes. Fear and ignorance makes people isolate themselves and become isolated from their surroundings. It means that many people are discriminated and unfairly treated - in school, at work, health care, social services, long term care and by decisions that are vital for the support the community can give.



## GAMIAN-Europe's News Flash



### World Federation for Mental Health Presidential New Year Message 2016

*I would like to wish a Happy New Year to all WFMH members, member associations, friends, volunteers, WFMH Directors and staff, particularly Ellen Mercer, Debbie Maguire, Elena Berger, Myrna Lachenal, Nancy Wallace, Hugh Schulze, Claire Brooks, and every person who has had contact with or is associated with mental health. It is your dedication and selfless service that has helped many people and families with mental health issues to continue to manage their wellbeing – I want to personally thank you for this. Since I became the 42nd President of the World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH) in October 2015 I have received many personal communications from institutions and individuals about mental health issues globally. Many of these messages have been encouraging, but there are still many people who continue to face challenges, irrespective of whether they live in a high, medium or low income country. This is a reminder that there is still a lot of work to be done to achieve mental health parity and address mental health stigma. I am using this New Year message to call on each of you to join us to truly make a difference.*

*The mental health community achieved a lot at the United Nations and World Health Organization in 2015 because of the hard work and dedication of people like you, the institutions that you belong to and represent, and the collaborations that have been forged. We must now re-double our efforts to make 2016 an even better year for mental health. The World Federation for Mental Health was set up in 1948 to advance mental health issues globally and to raise public awareness of mental health. World Mental Health Day has been held on 10th October annually since 1992.*

*Raising awareness of mental health issues is not just something we do for one day – it should be an everyday activity. So I have written a personal letter to the Ambassadors worldwide and to their missions based in Geneva asking for their help to identify the people in their countries to assist us in this task. All the responses I have received so far have been positive and WFMH will continue to build upon this alliance because we need our governments to become true partners in tackling the issue of stigma, discrimination and poor access to mental health.*

*Over the last year we have worked with the 'The World Dignity Project,' to raise mental health awareness by developing an easily recognisable Dignity symbol to improve mental health visibility. My mission is to drive public awareness about the need for Dignity in mental health, using the Dignity symbol to represent this concept. We aim to attract one million citizens of the world as founding members of this initiative so I seize this opportunity to ask you to visit the website ([www.worlddignityproject.com](http://www.worlddignityproject.com)), download the symbol, share it and include it wherever you can, for example in letterheads and publicity material taking, every opportunity to show solidarity with mental health.*

*We know that one in four adults will experience mental health difficulties in their lifetime, yet stigma and discrimination are significant barriers that deprive people of their dignity in mental health. None of us is immune from experiencing distress. Better equipping the general population to respond more appropriately to other people's distress in order to promote better mental health and wellbeing. With this in mind, I am very pleased to announce that the theme of 2016 World Mental Health Day will focus on something that binds us all together, Psychological and Mental Health First Aid. Please go to the WFMH website and keep abreast of the developing 2016 World Mental Health Day campaign so that you can also play your part.*

*Once more wishing you all a fruitful 2016.*

Best wishes

Gabriel Ivbijaro MBE JP President WFMH

