

Press Release

Mental health stakeholders call for patient-centred research, care and services

(Brussels, 3 December 2018)

Meeting in the European Parliament today, the Interest Group on Mental Health, Well-being and Brain Disorders, called on the European Commission as well as on national authorities to ensure more resources for and a stronger focus on patient-centred mental health policies, services and research. The meeting was co-organised by GAMIAN-Europe, representing patients and the European Psychiatric Association (EPA).

Hosted by Marian Harkin MEP and attended by some 60 experts - representatives of patient and health professional organisations, policymakers and researchers - was the occasion for a welcome and timely opportunity to exchange views on how a person-centred perspective can be ensured in EU-funded and mental health related research programmes. As the EU is on the verge of embarking on the next comprehensive Research and Innovation programme, Horizon Europe, the event provided a useful platform for stakeholders to put forward their views and input the ongoing EU-level and national discussions on the content of this proposal.

Recognition of the burden of mental health and the prevalence of mental health conditions - 11 % of the European population experience mental disorders every year – is on the increase as the proportion of the national health budget devoted to mental health ranges between 4% to 18% across the EU.

According to Hilka Kärkkäinen, GAMIAN-Europe President, *‘Mental ill health still goes hand in hand with substantial stigma, costs and consequences that impact individuals, families and carers, health and social systems, society and the economy. People with mental health issues should be put at the centre of their treatment and care and be viewed as a partner in the care process’.*

Co-chairing the event with Marian Harkin MEP, EPA President Professor Silvana Galderisi welcomed the fact that issues related to mental health care and services have increasingly been part of EU and national research agendas. She also noted that the general consensus on the importance of this concept is gaining ground, stating that *‘the time is now right to put this consensus into action and to develop effective and high-quality mental health care services. As the EU is currently developing Horizon Europe efforts need to be made to ensure parity of esteem and put mental health and person-centred research and care at the core of this agenda’.*

Other speakers, such as Michela Tinelli (London School of Economics) and Heleen Riper (University of Amsterdam), also underlined that person-centredness should be the crucial guiding principle for future EU-funded mental health research.

Speaking in the meeting Tomas Zdechovsky MEP expressed his appreciation of the growing and visible cooperation between mental health stakeholders, of which this meeting was a concrete example as *‘acting together we can amplify the voice of the sector and make sure that policymakers, researchers and service providers will take patient-centredness on board as a matter of course’.*