

Press Release

Making Greater Use of Psychotherapy Across Europe Experts Criticize One-sided Pharmacological Care

Brussels, 9th February 2012: Mental disorders are the common ‘diseases’ of the 21st century in Europe. Every third adult in Europe will experience mental health problems within the course of a year. Psychological distress is the main cause of the 58,000 suicides per year in Europe, thus resulting in more fatalities than road accidents. People with emotional problems continue to be stigmatized, which aggravates their suffering and increases their exclusion from society. The cost of mental illnesses is estimated to be three to four percent of the European gross domestic product, as a result in particular of inability to work, medical treatment and early retirement as well as the cost to the judicial system.

"Having worked as a psychoanalyst for over 20 years in Ireland, I know first-hand the devastating effects of mental illness. It is for this reason that I am personally committed to mental health as a political priority in the EU", stated Nessa Childers MEP addressing today's congress „Psychotherapy in Europe“ in Brussels. "Our society should be measured by how we treat the most vulnerable among us. EU and national policymakers must ensure that people living with mental illness have the services and care they need to be healthy, full and functioning members of society."

"Psychological problems continue to be seriously underestimated", explained Prof. Dr. Rainer Richter, President of the German Chamber of Psychotherapists. This is why a great effort must be made to ensure the evidence-based treatment of mental disorders. Psychotherapy is the method of choice for treatment of the majority of psychological problems or at least an indispensable part of any overall treatment plan. Yet despite this, the use of psychotherapy is comparatively infrequent. In a European comparison the use of psychiatric drugs dominated, although they are rejected by many patients because of their side-effects and, as in the case of major depression, should only be prescribed in combination with psychotherapy.

The Network for Psychotherapeutic Care in Europe therefore demands an urgent intensification of research into mental health care. European funding of research has until now one-sidedly supported basic genetic and neurobiological research. However, what mentally ill people above all need is effective treatment concepts in daily out-patient or hospital practice.

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