

## Keynote Presentation – Peter Lehmann, International Survivor Activist

Good morning.

I feel very honoured to be invited here and be the first speaker. I come from Germany and I have to apologise a little for my English. It just improves a little each year, but on getting older I start to forget a lot of things all the time. This year I did not forget to take the plane but I forget all my cards with my address but in case you want to contact me I am here today. On the leaflets which are distributed there is my address, and my book is there on the table with my address also.

The European Network of User and Survivors of Psychiatry was founded in 1991. The working language of the network is English and it's always a pity to hear that people in England have not heard of the network because of problems with communication. Sometimes people who are elected to represent the network are not always those who bring the information back to their organisation. The UK Network is meant to be a European voice on European level decisions, for example the European Union or the European level of the World Health Organisation (WHO) level and so on - and it is very important that users and survivors of psychiatry are organised on a European level. We exchange some information. The basis of the network is to reduce any unilateral approach to emotional distress type disorders and to promote self determination for user/survivor controlled alternatives to psychiatry.

One of our problems is language. We have about 30-35 different languages in Europe and it is very hard so we have to learn plain English for example. When we have big meetings, people from England have problems to be understood because they speak too quickly for us, using complicated language and so we use simple language. This is very helpful, but for you it would be very easy to contact the representatives in the network, for example there is Mary Neville from England and board members from the UK, Netherlands and Ireland. You can contact them if you want and the website address for the Board is at the bottom of the leaflet.

One activity this year was the contribution to the World Psychiatric Association Congress whose theme was coercive treatment in psychiatry. It was agreed with WPA that on behalf of the user/survivor organisations that I would join the organisation committee. Key lectures were presented to the congress by Judith Chamberlain and Dorothy Arbuk- a German survivor with about 70 years of personal experience and witness of German fascism. You can see now that all the lectures are taped on video and dvd and we have brought to the internet all these pages that you can see and which are important for you as a user/survivor perspectives. We also had the declaration against coercive psychiatric treatment which a lot of organisations agreed and which was distributed there.

This action project against harassment and discrimination links with another activity on a European level within the framework of the community action programme. This seeks to combat discrimination together with MIND from England, mental health Europe and a lot of user survivor organisations. This made proposals to combat harassment which were presented to the European Union and you can read about it at the web address shown on the leaflet.

Another activity of the European network was participation at this conference on the future of mental health promotion and mental health care. Three main topics were accepted by WHO and the European commission to create a common strategy - developing innovative and comprehensive new policies in consultation with users, development of non stigmatising and self help approaches, and development of mental health legislation based on human rights. Of course, it doesn't mean anything until other organisations in different countries start to create pressure and refer to this paper. I mention it here, because sometimes the national organisations don't spread information about new successes on the European level.

Alternatives beyond psychiatry is the book which tackles all the topics which people are experts in this field address all the time. Over 30 years these are the questions that are regularly asked. The telephone rings: where can I help? How can I get medical help? How can I get help for a relative or friend in need? How can I protect myself from invasive treatment? What are the alternatives to psychiatry? How can I get involved in raising alternatives? Assuming psychiatry will be abolished, what can I do instead? I don't want to spend too much time on the book. There are some on the table and you can have a look and there are leaflets in your folder. I have been invited here to promote it. If there are any media people who write reviews for a small papers or magazines, you are kindly invited to review and you can have a review copy and this book.

One topic of the book is about Recovery. There is no German term for recovery. There is a huge tension in this term. You can understand it as recovering from a mental illness, reduction of symptoms or a cure with psychotic drugs, or as a statement of regaining freedom after leaving the psychiatric system. There are now in Germany books from psychiatrists speaking about recovery, supported by pharmaceutical companies. They are supported by people speaking about recovery through administration of psychotic drugs. So this important topic has been spoiled by big pharmaceutical companies. You can have a wonderful life again and so it is a big change and a big topic spoiled destroyed by big pharma. But you are starting the discussion here.

Thank you very much for your time.

# Whose Recovery is it Anyway?

Social Perspectives Network, in partnership with the Delivering Race Equality Programme, Social Care Institute for Excellence, and the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Advisory Group

## Paper 11

