



## Foreword

### **The Belgian Reform in Mental Health Care: where are we now?**

Mental health care in most countries need substantial Reforms.

WHO's Mental Health Atlas demonstrated that the financial resources allocated for mental health care are low, the care strongly remained a hospital-based system and the integration of mental health care in general health care is inadequate. Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020 adopted by the World Health Assembly in 2013 clearly articulates the objective of providing health and social care services in community based settings.

Against this background, the Reforms carried out in Belgium for mental health care since 2010 are very welcome. Reforms are never easy and those in mental health care are especially difficult.

This publication describes not only what has been done in Belgium but also how it has been done. While the progress made is commendable, the process of doing so and overcoming barriers is very useful to share.

It is clear that successful reform involves multisectoral action and multi-stakeholder collaboration. While providing effective treatment is an essential goal, provision of housing, social care and employment is critical for good recovery.

And to do all this with the person with mental disorders being the center of all efforts, adds value. Indeed, participation of service users and relatives in all decision making and their empowerment are essential elements of the reforms.

This also ensures respect to human rights of persons with mental disorders and their families. Eventually, mental health care reforms decrease stigma against mental disorders and enhance recovery and integration of persons with mental disorders into all activities of community.

Reform is a continuous process; I hope that Belgium will continue to make community mental health care available to all who need it and also improve the quality of services. I also hope that the experience described in this publication will be useful to many others who are making efforts in this direction in other communities and countries.

Docteur Shekhar Saxena  
Director,  
Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse  
World Health Organization