

## PRESS RELEASE

### MHADIE

A new framework for supporting health and disability policy in Europe

Final EU Project's results and Policy Recommendations presented at European Parliament on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2008

The Italian Foundation IRCCS Neurological Institute Carlo Besta of Milan coordinated an innovative European research that involved for three years leading international researchers and that will allow the European Union to propose to its member countries a new model for disability policy within both health, statistical and social contexts.

This project's results are of great interest to those concerned with health and disability issues, as well as the larger scientific community. As **Dr Matilde Leonardi** from the **Scientific Direction** of the Institute, leader of the **Neurology, Public Health, Disability Unit** and coordinator of this important European project, puts it: *“For the first time health and disability issues have been approached not merely from a narrow clinical perspective but from one in which environmental, psychological and quality of life aspects of the total lived experience have been also taken into account.*

MHADIE researchers developed a framework to **influence and support new European policy guidelines on health and disability through statistical, clinical, educational and experimental research, and used ICF (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health) as a cross-cutting universal framework and international standard.** The ICF provides a new framework for conceptualizing health and disability.

An important aim of the MHADIE project was a workable and generic **definition of disability**, one which reflects the view of MHADIE researchers that disability is a universal, human condition, not the distinguishing mark of a separate, minority group. **Disability is defined by MHADIE researchers as... difficulty in functioning at the body, person or societal levels, in one or more life domains, as experienced by an individual with a health condition in interaction with contextual factors.** (Leonardi M, et al. on behalf of the MHADIE consortium (2006). The definition of disability: what is in a name? *Lancet* 368:1219-1221).

MHADIE results show the feasibility of a comprehensive description of disability, an evidence based definition of domains of functioning and disability, and the creation of a baseline reference population for comparisons, thereby **increasing the EU capacity of analysis** as requested by the EU disability Action Plan 2006-2007.

The results of MHADIE Project provide the background and justification for recommendations and guidelines that will help to design new European policy on health and disability.

These **MHADIE Policy recommendations can be downloaded at [www.mhadie.it](http://www.mhadie.it)** Among the partners of the “Neurology, Public Health, Disability” Unit led by Dr Matilde Leonardi **are the World Health Organization, the European Federation of Neurological Associations and leading world experts in health and social policy and ICF from Spain, Slovenia, Switzerland, Sweden, Rumania, Ireland, Germany, Czech Republic as well as the Family and Social Solidarity Department of Regione Lombardia, the Regional Health Agency of Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia, Don Gnocchi Foundation, CF Consulting and the Disability Italian Network (DIN).**

On 16<sup>th</sup> September they will be at the EU Parliament hosted by Vice President Mario Mauro and will discuss MHADIE results with several MePs, Government representatives, stakeholders Commission's representatives. As Dr Leonardi says: *“Understanding how to respond to the needs of people with disabilities means understanding how to influence social and economic policies as well as designing specific tools to combat discrimination and promote social integration and participation, thus enhancing opportunities.”* This is what MHADIE did.