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PRESS RELEASE ON THE OCCASION OF WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY 2008

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Making Inclusion a European Reality – Promoting an Integrated Approach to the Inclusion of People with Mental Health Problems

The 10th of October marks the annual commemoration of World Mental Health Day, the only annual global awareness campaign, celebrated in over 100 countries, focusing specifically on improving public understanding about mental health and mental illnesses.

On this year's World Mental Health Day, Mental Health Europe (MHE) wants to recall the **many achievements in the field of mental health and well-being** that have taken place in Europe over the last decades. Europe has witnessed the closure of the large psychiatric hospitals and institutions in many countries and the beginning of a process of de-institutionalisation resulting in the creation of support services providing independent living in the community for people with mental health problems. Across Europe more and more emphasis is placed on the social dimension of mental health and well-being and there is a growing recognition of the social inclusion challenges of people with mental health problems.

But the situation in Europe is still far from ideal. MHE wants to call attention to the fact that despite the increased attention to these issues in Europe, mental health and well-being and the promotion of social inclusion of people with mental health problems is still not receiving the attention it deserves. An increasing number of people living in Europe experience or are at risk of developing mental health problems. **In today's rapidly changing economy people are at a greater risk than ever to fall into a vicious circle of mental ill-health, unemployment, poverty, housing problems, social isolation and worsening mental health problems**, from which it is only very hard to escape. In all European countries, there is a need to step up efforts to develop policies and initiatives to break this vicious circle.

At the European level, **the EU's forthcoming Recommendation on an Active Inclusion is a very welcome step** in that direction. MHE believes that in order for the European Union make a clear commitment towards strengthening a Europe that is social and inclusive, leaving no one behind, there is a need to strengthen the three pillars of Active Inclusion that guarantee adequate minimum income, quality services and access to employment for people furthest from the labour market. However, this is only part of the solution. In Europe many people with mental health problems are facing poverty, homelessness and social exclusion as a result of their enduring mental illness and the socio-economic systems' inability to provide opportunities for

these people as full citizens. The EU also needs to address these people's concerns by strengthening the Open Method of Coordination on Social Inclusion and Social Protection in all Member States, thus **ensuring that all European citizens have the opportunity, within the scope of their abilities, to participate and contribute to the society in which they live.**

"Promoting and nurturing mental health and well-being should go hand in hand with planning for a prosperous and just economy, working to respond to the challenges presented by poverty and deprivation and facilitating social inclusion and cohesion", says Malgorzata Kmita, President of MHE. ***"Indeed, it can be argued that there can be no social inclusion and cohesion without positive mental health and well-being and there can be no mental health and well-being without social inclusion and cohesion."***

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Notes to Editors:

Mental Health Europe (MHE) is a European non-governmental organisation committed to the promotion of positive mental health, the prevention of mental distress, the improvement of care, advocacy for social inclusion and the protection of human rights for (ex)users of mental health services, their families and carers.

For more information: www.mhe-sme.org