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Outrage at the new law on the Protection of Minors and Public Information: this law is a risk to public health, an insult to human rights

Many Lithuanians have been abandoned today. All the Lithuanians that believe in human rights and in a fair society have been left alone. Mental Health Europe and the International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network are extremely disappointed by the Lithuanian Parliament overturning the veto of the President of the Republic to the new law on minors and public information.

It is highly unfortunate that the concern for the wellbeing of young people which is an important and noble cause is used as an excuse to violate the rights of many children, young people and their families. The law that has been approved today will have a dramatic effect on the mental health of gay and lesbian youth as well as the biological children and families of gay, lesbians and bisexual people. How will they now be protected from bullying in schools and stigma and discrimination in life? Furthermore it might stigmatise any family that does not correspond to the traditional norm and undermine health promotion in relation to sexual and reproductive health.

We strongly disagree with a law which assumes that the promotion of the rights of every person independently from the sexual orientation is detrimental for the mental health of young people. We, as organisations active in the field of mental health, social and human rights, believe that this is unacceptable. Homosexuality is not a mental disease and this is known and generally accepted for a long time. "It is also known that stigma and discrimination of homosexuals can affect negatively the mental health and well being of young people" says Mary Van Dievel, Director of Mental Health Europe.

"The decision taken by politicians today shows that the most basic notions of human rights and public health are disregarded by the Lithuanian parliament. It is unworthy for a European Union Member State. 'David Cameron the leader of the conservatives in England recently publicly apologized on behalf the Tories for a similar law that was passed under Margaret Thatcher. It did not work in England and it will not work in Lithuania. We just hope that Lithuanians will oppose discrimination and will not have to wait for an apology from their leaders as long as the British people had. It would be sad that history does not teach us anything" said Vicky Claeys, Regional Director of IPPF EN.

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

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The International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network is the biggest network in Europe working on sexual and reproductive health, family issues and human rights Across Europe and Central Asia www.ippfen.org. **For further information** contact Irene Donadio at idonadio@ippfen.org, Tel + 3222500950