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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Poverty and Mental Health in the EU: A Human Rights Issue Mental Health Europe holds event at the European Parliament

On 30 November, Mental Health Europe (MHE) is holding its annual awareness-raising event at the European Parliament. This year's topic is linked to the upcoming European Year 2010 for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion and is dedicated to the issue of poverty and mental health in the EU to raise the awareness on the human rights dimension. MHE calls on the Members of European Parliament to incorporate these issues into their legislative work and initiatives.

In the European Union, 78 million people are currently living at risk of poverty. In all Member States, part of the population is subject to exclusion and deprivation, often facing limited access to basic services. In addition to this, there are indications that extreme poverty has become more of an issue and that the number of people suffering from poverty has increased. People with low income are more likely to suffer from poor mental health and poverty effectively causing or contributing to poor mental health. Mental Health Europe believes that attaining a good quality of life is a prerequisite for positive mental health.

Mental Health Europe (MHE) has growing concerns about the increase of poverty. The bidirectionality of mental health problems and poverty are known. Poor mental health can lead to unemployment, isolation, social exclusion, low education and frequently homelessness for a number of people. Conversely, poverty can lead to the development of mental health problems. Some groups of people in the society are more at risk of suffering from mental health problems like women, young people and children, migrants and older people. Subsequently, they can be further excluded from society and be at risk of greater violations of their basic human rights such as the right to full participation in the society. People experiencing mental health problems and poverty at the same time are often victims of discrimination on the double ground of mental illness and poverty.

Mental Health Europe underlines the urgent political need to implement cohesive policies and services at all levels and to guarantee human rights for all including people with mental health problems living in poverty. MHE calls for engagement and responsible political leadership of Members of European Parliament. Breaking the vicious circle of having a mental health problem and a low income will require the concerted efforts of governments, health and social services, the employment service and the voluntary sector, working together in partnership.

To read MHE's position paper "Poverty and mental health in the EU: A human rights issue", please visit the following link: <http://www.mhe-sme.org/en/publications/mhe-position-papers.html>

For further information:

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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