



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Brussels, 27 November 2008

Mental Health Europe calls on the Greek government to put an end to the dramatic situation in the Mental Health sector!

The Greek Mental Health sector is facing dramatic times. Mental Health Europe is deeply concerned about the future of the public (community) mental health services system in Greece and calls upon national policy and decision makers to take urgent actions.

During the last 20 years thousands of people across Europe have walked the long way from the psychiatric asylums back to community, to social support and effective treatment, to life. The guidelines of the World Health Organization and the European Commission are quite clear: letting back the old institutional care, transforming the services into a community network which should offer a wide range of psychiatric and medical care, social support, training opportunities, right's advocacy. There have been great examples of significant experiences all over Europe where inspired professionals, mobilized patients and relatives, persistent decision makers at the political level and all the community stakeholders transformed into everyday reality what seemed impossible: they exchanged the gloom of logic with the optimism of action.

After the scandal involving the Leros State Mental Health Hospital (1988-89) the coordinated efforts of the Greek psychiatric community, the European Commission, international experts and European mental health teams financed by the EU under a special measure (Regulation 815/84) from 1990-5, also Greece initiated the deinstitutionalisation procedures and the long term planning (2000-2010) regarding the psychiatric services under the title "Psychargos". This Greek National Mental Health Plan has created a large consensus between mental health professionals, political and local authorities, mass media, associations of families and users as a continuity of the psychiatric reform started with the deinstitutionalisation of the Leros asylum. The country used to offer many an example of good practice.

That is, until recently!

For the last 3 years, the state has systematically failed to maintain the values and momentum of the reforms. This has caused a series of problems and roadblocks regarding the transition from institutional to community care. The community mental health sector fears an unparalleled regression: return of long-term patients to psychiatric hospitals that should have been closed down and generalised incapacity of the psychiatric system to cover the needs.

The problems are presented as administrative but at root they are mainly about the ethical values concerning the rights of people with mental health problems, about the attitudes towards provision of care, and finally, an issue of political determination!

Mental Health Europe shares the deep concern of a growing number of service users, relatives, professionals as well as representatives of the European Parliament for the future of the public (community) mental health services system in Greece.



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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