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PRESS RELEASE

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Swedish EU Presidency work programme: which priorities for Mental Health and Well-being?

On 1 July 2009, Sweden took over the Presidency of the Council of the EU from the Czech Republic. As the work programme of the Swedish Presidency states, the coming six months will be characterised by both change and renewal. Mental Health Europe (MHE) has expressed its view on the Presidency's priorities and in particular on those ones relevant to the mental health and well-being of the population.

The Swedish Presidency will take initiative in many areas that are relevant to the work of MHE as they impact on the mental health policies: employment and social policy, human rights and disability, health promotion and gender issues.

In the field of employment and social policy, the Swedish Presidency aims to reduce the negative effects of the ongoing crisis and to promote the active participation of people with a reduced work capacity because of ill-health. MHE will pursue the work of the Swedish Presidency and continue to bring forward the **inclusion of people with mental health problems into the labour market.**

In the field of human rights and disability, the Swedish Presidency will follow-up on the directive on the equal treatment of persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. Despite the **issue of discrimination** is addressed, MHE regrets the weak commitment of the Presidency and is particularly disappointed by the **lack of clear priorities** in this field.

Furthermore, the work programme aims to increase the opportunities for **healthy and dignified ageing** for older people in the EU as well as to improve cooperation to promote good living conditions for **young people** in the EU. MHE believes that these are central issues for mental health and wellbeing as they are fundamental to the future social and economic growth of the European region.

An important focus will also be on **gender equality**, with specific attention to initiatives to create better opportunities to both reconcile work and family life. MHE states that in order to ensure growth and development, the EU must make better use of the potential of both women and men.

Mental Health Europe believes that much more can be done to promote mental health and well-being and prevent mental disorders in the EU. At the challenging time of the new European Parliament and Commission, MHE calls on the Swedish Presidency to

take a concrete commitment to keep mental health high on the political agenda and to undertake sensible actions to raise the profile of mental health and well-being in the EU.

To read more on the MHE view on the Swedish Presidency's priorities, visit the MHE website at <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