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PRESS RELEASE

MHE Test for the German EU Presidency on Mental Health and Well-Being

Germany has taken on the EU Presidency as of 1st January 2007. Among its priorities, the German Presidency has identified three key issues in the area of health: Health Promotion, Innovation and Access to Healthcare. The Presidency is also aiming to finalise the health action programme until 2013 and to develop a Community framework on health services.

Mental Health Europe (MHE) hopes that the German EU Presidency will also help the European Union move towards a more social Europe respectful of the fundamental rights of all, especially those who experience mental health problems. In a Presidency test on mental health and well-being, MHE calls on the German EU Presidency to contribute to improving the situation of people with mental health problems in the areas of employment, social policy, health and human rights, and to empower and involve them in the decision-making process.

The German Presidency should further strengthen the social dimension of the revised Employment Strategy, thereby **acknowledging people with mental health problems as one of the vulnerable groups furthest from the labour market**, and it should raise awareness on issues related to the employment of people with mental health problems in the frame of the European Year of Equal Opportunities (2007).

There is an urgent need to strengthen the European social model by providing support to people with mental health problems and promoting their social inclusion. In particular, the most vulnerable groups such as **women and girls, young people, the elderly and migrants with mental health problems need to be protected against discrimination and enabled to better participate in social, professional and political life.**

In the area of health, the Presidency should not only focus on health as a general category but actively pursue work on the wide range of Community activities which aim to **contribute to a high level of mental health and well-being for all citizens, focusing on mental health promotion, prevention of mental distress, innovation and access to mental health care in the community.** Mental health and well-being needs to be included in the new Public Health Programme and in the discussions on a new European Health Strategy as one of the key issues.

Finally, it is imperative to **improve the situation of people with mental health problems with regard to abuses in psychiatric institutions, rehabilitation centres and orphanages** in many European Member States and to find alternatives to the traditional institutions in the community.

The MHE test for the German EU Presidency on mental health can be found here: <http://www.mhe-sme.org/en/our-work/news-from-the-mhe-secretariat.html>

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