



MENTAL HEALTH EUROPE – SANTE MENTALE EUROPE aisbl
Boulevard Clovis 7, B-1000 Brussels
Tel +32 2 280 04 68 - Fax +32 2 280 16 04
E-Mail: info@mhe-sme.org
www.mhe-sme.org

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Brussels, 3 February 2009

Mental Health Europe calls on the French policy makers not to worsen the situation of persons in mental health facilities

During his speech at the ERASME hospital of Antony (France) last December, the French President Nicolas Sarkozy announced the release of seventy thousands Euros to secure the psychiatric facilities, to create 160 beds in care units for problematic patients and to reinforce safety measures for secluded persons by building walls and making use of electronic bracelets.

The mental health service users represented by the MHE member organisation Advocacy France express their deep concern about such a decision. Advocacy France stresses that putting these measures into force will contribute to increase the fear of "madness" and the tendency to further socially exclude the persons suffering from mental health problems, whereas violence committed in a state of hallucination, including murders, happens to be an extreme rare event in comparison to the overall crime statistics.

Moreover, such measures tend to reinforce the deprivation of liberty of those people who were secluded in order to recover, and not because of the offence against the law they might have committed. They aim at identifying these persons as potential criminals. In the case of health care, only the practitioner is entitled to decide with his/her patient on appropriate measures to detain him/her and these are not punitive actions.

Advocacy France believes that the French President's announcement of an increase in the number of isolation rooms and compulsory treatment will not strengthen health care but will restrain it instead. These measures deprive the mental health facilities of the essential budget provisions, in particular first aid centers and local crisis centers. These centers are key places where negotiations and discussions can take place and lead to an actual consent. They allow the rights of persons to be protected by applying constraint measures only in case of emergency and severe crisis. Persons with mental health problems must not be deprived from their liberty without being provided first with the possibility to give a valuable consent to a treatment or a hospitalization.

Mental Health Europe shares the concerns of Advocacy France as well as of other organisations, carers and users representatives. Mental Health Europe calls on the French policy and decision makers not to give support to the security strategy of President Sarkozy regarding persons with severe mental health problems. Mental Health Europe's view is that **such a policy will inevitably amplify the stigma and discrimination against those persons who suffer from mental health problems.**

Mental Health Europe strongly regrets the decision of President Sarkozy as this goes in the opposite direction of the social inclusion of people with mental health problems. **Mental Health Europe wants to remind the French government about its historical**

commitment and promise to fight against human rights violations. Mental Health Europe recalls that people with mental health problems enjoy the same human rights as all the population and calls therefore on the French policy makers not to worsen the situation of persons with mental health problems by endorsing such a policy proposal.

For further information:

Contact the Mental Health Europe Secretariat

Email info@mhe-sme.org, Tel. +32 2 280 04 68

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