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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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World Mental Health Day 2009 - Mental Health Europe launches the campaign "Mental Health and Social Inclusion: Making Steps!"

The 10th of October is the World Mental Health Day. Mental Health Europe (MHE) is launching its campaign "Mental Health and Social Inclusion: Making Steps" on the occasion of this year's World Mental Health Day, advocating for the integration of people with mental health problems in all aspects of life. Mental Health Europe would like to remind policy-makers and civil society that everyone has potential!

Mental health problems can affect anyone. According to the World Health Organisation, one in four people experiences some form of mental health disorder during their lifetime. Financial hardship, unemployment, lack of a social network and uncertainty about the future very often increases the rate of people facing distresses as these difficulties have a negative impact on people's wellbeing and health. Mental illnesses can be both a cause and a consequence of social exclusion. Many people who suffer from mental health problems face stigma and discrimination, and for an increasing number, poverty is a reality.

Mental health is as important as physical health to the overall wellbeing of individuals and societies. Yet only a small minority of those living with mental health problems receives treatment. Fear of disclosure, rejection by friends, and discrimination are a few reasons why people with mental disorders don't seek help. Overcoming prejudice and discrimination, getting effective services, and being part of a support network can help them to enjoy meaningful lives and meaningful relationships. We need to de-stigmatise mental illness and we can do this by thinking and acting in a positive way!

Society often marginalises people suffering from mental health problems so that they cannot fully take part in society. They are frequently considered to be "strange" or "mad" and they have more difficulties to obtain employment, access education and training, enjoying leisure activities, participate in social life. Even securing appropriate accommodation or accessing adequate care services often proves difficult for people with mental health problems. We need to safeguard everyone's basic human rights in society!

Mental Health Europe believes everyone can do something to make social inclusion of people with mental health problems a reality. MHE would like to highlight their abilities rather than non-abilities and calls for their active inclusion into society with access to employment, education, quality-care and housing. Everyone has the right to make a contribution to society. People with mental health problems can work, have talents and skills and have the right to use them. Let's make steps towards social inclusion!

Our campaign website is now online! Visit our webpage and support our campaign at:
<http://www.mhe-sme.org/making-steps.html>

For further information:

Contact the Mental Health Europe Secretariat

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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