



EUROPE MUST SAY "NO" TO HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

Statement on the need for deinstitutionalization

MHE was highly shocked by the news from a Dutch boy with complex dependency needs, tied to the wall of his room in an institution for persons with mental retardation and mental health problems. He had also not been out of his room for the last 3 years. See video [here](#).

This dramatic situation has received an extended press coverage in the Netherlands and in Belgium. Everybody speaks about an unacceptable, unbelievable and inhuman situation. The different reports speak about 9000 persons living in comparable situations in other institutions children and young people with learning and mental health problems, psychiatry and the elderly care.

Also the Dutch Government has taken the case seriously. Mrs. M. Veldhuyzen, State secretary visited the institution and the case was also discussed in the parliament. Mr. Jose Smits, a collaborator of ANED (Academic Network European Disability Experts) and Rapporteur for the Fundamental Rights agency (FRA) in Vienna is stating that this is not an isolated case.

MHE states that the running of institutions is in contradiction with the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UN CRPD). The Dutch Government has also not ratified the Convention. More alarming is that the Dutch law proposal on constraints and seclusion (Wetsontwerp Zorg en Dwang) agrees that constraints can be applied without consent when the person is a danger for himself or the others. This opens the door to even more constraints in institutions but also at home. The parents have to accept the solutions offered by the institutions

Mental health Europe wishes to take this exemplary and inhuman case which is unfortunately happening in all EU Countries and ask its members to support

- the ratification of the UN CRPD by their Government;
- the deinstitutionalization process and the creation of community-based services;
- the respect of users rights and their involvement in decision-making;
- the setting up of ombuds services and quality control agency.

There are still more than 1 million EU citizens with disabilities living in institutions. The majority of these institutions produce poor outcomes of service quality, there are frequent reports about physical or sexual abuse, and service users are not granted even their basic human rights.

Mental Health Europe calls all European governments to act consequently and to stop this kind of mistreatment and human rights abuse. According to studies and human rights organizations these unacceptable situations are overrepresented in residential institutions for people living with mental health problems.

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About deinstitutionalization

Unfortunately there are still many misbeliefs about institutions and their alternatives, community based services. It's time to acknowledge the basic facts about deinstitutionalization.

5 important facts about deinstitutionalization:

1. **Quality of service is better in community living.** Studies which focused on the differences between quality of service delivered in institutions and the quality of community based services clearly showed: Institutions provide generally poorer quality of services.
2. **Costs effectiveness – community based services don't cost us more.** Many studies focusing on the costs of institutional care and the costs of community based services showed that institutional care is not at all cheaper than community based services.
3. **Experience on community based services is available.** Decision makers often say that there is very little practical experience on the transition from institutions to community living. This is simply not true. The process of 'deinstitutionalization' is well advanced in Scandinavia, the USA, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australasia.
4. **Institutions cannot protect people from exploitation and abuse.** Many people think that disabled people need protection that can only be provided in big institutions. At the same time empirical studies showed the opposite: well structured community based services mean lower risk of abuse or exploitation than institutions.
5. **Governments do have the financial sources for the one-time costs of deinstitutionalization.** Structural Funds provided by the European Union are a possible source of finances for the cost of deinstitutionalization. There are countries such as Bulgaria where the Government made serious commitment to use EU Structural Funds for closing down institutions and setting up community based services for children.

About Mental Health Europe

Mental Health Europe (MHE) is an 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 people with mental health problems, their families and carers. MHE vision is of a Europe where mental health and well-being is given high priority in the political spectrum and on the European health and social agenda, where people with mental health problems live as full citizens with access to appropriate services and support when needed, and where meaningful participation is guaranteed at all levels of decision-making and administration. MHE's values are based on dignity and respect, equal opportunities, freedom of choice, anti-discrimination, social inclusion, democracy and participation.

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