



NEWS RELEASE

Embargo: 16.45 Friday 8th October 1999
Issued by: Susan Kirkwood EUFAMI
Contact:

Declaration launched to safeguard the rights of the four million people with mental illness people in Europe

Stockholm, Friday 8th October 1999: Today, at the Third European EUFAMI Congress, carers of people with mental illness met to launch a declaration to safeguard the rights of the four million people with mental illness in Europe. 'The Stockholm Declaration for the Year 2000' was launched by EUFAMI, the representative body for voluntary organisations throughout Europe which promote the interests and well-being of people with mental illness and their carers.

The declaration, launched at 'The Caring Future... Starts Now!', which is the largest congress of its kind, calls for everyone concerned with the care and treatment of people with mental illness across Europe to take all necessary steps to secure a more caring future, including:

- the empowerment of family members and friends who care for people with mental illness, through training and promotion of self-help strategies;
- the mobilisation of all available means to combat stigma and discrimination against people with mental illness, and
- the adoption by professionals of standards of best practice in prevention and treatment.

Esther Twomey, Vice President of EUFAMI said: □ **This congress provides a unique opportunity for carers to influence research, standards of care and the support that is necessary to ensure the well-being of all those affected. The Stockholm Declaration for the Year 2000 demonstrates that, as we move into the next century, it is critical that the rights of people with mental illness are recognised, met and protected.** □

Schizophrenia affects 1 in 100 people world-wide at some time in their life and for every single patient with schizophrenia, many more carers and family members are also affected. Tragically, the disease often occurs relatively early in life, usually between the ages of 17 and 30 years in men, and between 20 and 40 years in women, and may lead to a termination of education, unemployment and social isolation.

Emma, aged 23, a young woman with schizophrenia commented; □ **Since I was diagnosed, people often seem wary of me, and warn strangers in advance that I have schizophrenia which can be upsetting. I have also experienced problems at work with previous employers**



NEWS RELEASE

Embargo: 16.45 Friday 8th October 1999
Issued by: Susan Kirkwood EUFAMI
Contact:

because of my symptoms and their misconceptions. Fighting for greater acceptance, understanding and human rights for people with schizophrenia is something I fully support.□ The need for the declaration is further emphasised by the results of a recent survey¹ which showed that 61% of European psychiatrists said that people with schizophrenia are not given the best chance of reintegrating into society successfully. The reasons cited for this included insufficient funding and lack of employment opportunities and rehabilitation facilities.

Speaking at the EUFAMI congress, Professor Dieter Naber, University of Hamburg said: □It is vital that people with schizophrenia have the right to the best treatment and care available which can significantly improve their symptoms and help them to lead more productive and independent lives. The 'Caring Future' not only involves people with schizophrenia, carers and healthcare professionals but needs to encompass all members of our society to ensure that people living with this disease are treated as equals in society and have the same rights and opportunities.□

Founded in 1990, EUFAMI is a democratic, member-led organisation, registered in Brussels under Belgian law. EUFAMI was formed by members of carer organisations who, overwhelmed by trauma of severe mental illness in the family, and finding their ability to cope undermined, shared their experience of helplessness and frustration, and resolved to work together to help themselves and the people that they care for.

- Ends -

References

1. Survey of 686 psychiatrists across nine European countries conducted by Martin Hamblin between 17th February and 3rd March 1999

Notes to Editors

EUFAMI is the European Federation of Family Association of People with Mental Illness. More information about EUFAMI can be found on the following website: www.eufami.org.

The Stockholm Declaration for the Year 2000 updates the previous declarations made by EUFAMI at De Haan, Belgium and Barcelona, Spain.