

This statement reflects the views of families and friends of people with psychiatric disability on their role in fostering the remission and recovery of people with severe and disabling mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and similar conditions.

### **EUFAMI's Position on Recovery from Mental Health Disabilities**

EUFAMI asserts that family and friends can have a key role to play in their relative or friend's road to recovery based on an alliance among professional care givers, the person experiencing mental illness and the family.

Families can provide an appropriate environment for positive change if they themselves understand the process of recovery through receiving help and training from peers and professionals. With such help and training they can support and empower their ill relative to work towards social reintegration and recovery from mental health disability.

Recovery is the development of personal potential, coping with disabilities and re-establishing a valid social role even with the limitations caused by illness.

In order to recover the person needs:

- To regain self-esteem, a sense of purpose and personal fulfilment, experiencing empowerment regarding his/her life and environment in a context based on hope, respect and responsibility.
- To achieve control over psychiatric symptoms through use of effective and safe psychotropic medication, supported by professional intervention aimed at going beyond compliance, fostering and supporting adherence to treatments.
- To be able to cope with disability through appropriate psychotherapeutic, rehabilitative and other evidence-based interventions in order to support and promote employment, education, independent living, social interaction and inclusion.
- To be able to choose from a range of other complementary treatments, e.g. physical exercise, nutritional supplementation, etc in the framework of a person-centred and holistic approach.
- To cope with and to overcome stigma and discrimination.

### **Recommendations**

Governments should have disability and antidiscrimination legislation in place, with recommendations and action plans to ensure that requirements are implemented, so that people with mental illness can exercise the right to share in the opportunities, enjoyments, challenges and responsibilities of everyday life - in fact the same rights as other citizens with a disability, such as:

1. Continuing regular personal support from a key worker using assessments and written plans on how to reach the person's relevant life goals - not plans dealing only with treatment and care. All assessments and written plans must be formulated together by the professional and the person and regularly updated. National mental health laws should require that both the person with a mental illness and the informal carer or family member should be involved in having their needs assessed by an assigned key worker, and that an action plan should be drawn up, implemented and regularly monitored.
2. Access to a range of specialised social support services that can be called on at times of greatest need, e.g. crisis services such as a crisis outreach team and a crisis house providing alternatives to hospital admission, day centres, befriending schemes, supported or co-operative working environments etc.
3. Access to effective and safe medication, prescribed following best practice guidelines.
4. Independent financial support from the state, removing the need for dependency on family finances.
5. A choice of appropriate accommodation, with the necessary levels of personal support when needed.
6. Access to meaningful occupation, with appropriate personal support when needed.
7. Access to, and support in use of, mainstream social activities and facilities.
8. Help with developing social networks where professionals and family and friends can provide additional support, share responsibilities and give each other mutual support.
9. Social inclusion, and the right *not* to be discriminated against. Governments should take steps to improve public understanding of mental illness, and thereby help combat stigma. People with experience of mental illness and their carers can speak out effectively to help change the public's perceptions and understanding of mental illness.