



Complex Needs Conference
Bruxelles, 4-5 June 2008

**Towards future actions for the improvement of living
conditions of people with severe disabilities or
complex needs**

MHE STATEMENT

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Mental Health Europe Statement



MHE's vision towards the improvement of the living
conditions of people with severe mental illness or
complex needs is based on the principles of:

- ***Dignity***
 - ***Respect***
 - ***Equal opportunities***
 - ***Freedom of choice***
 - ***Non-discrimination***
 - ***Full participation***
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Mental Health Europe Statement



MHE fights for better and humane living conditions with neither exclusion nor constraints:

- Patients or residents must regain human dignity and respect
 - Institutionalisation starts slowly, with medical treatments, hospitalisation, seclusion etc.
 - In the long-term, this often results in powerlessness, stigmatisation, and loss of dignity, self-esteem and social identity.
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MHE believes that patients and residents must regain human dignity and the respect due to all human beings.

- The improvement of the living conditions of people with severe mental health problems is a long process where changes can only be achieved through joint actions at all levels:
 - Policy and decision makers
 - Service providers
 - Professionals
 - Families and users
 - Media
 - Policy makers must understand the specific needs of these people and identify different types of alternatives that match the great variety of their needs.
 - Specific budgetary provisions should be put in place.
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MHE calls service providers and professionals from all levels and sectors to work towards the empowerment of users to make them aware of their rights and benefits thus enabling them to express their own choices in their personal life:

- To re-acquire the rights of citizens: the right to vote, to have identity papers, to receive benefits and to take decisions
 - To recover self-esteem, confidence and competences as well as to learn new roles in life. Enabling these people to make positive choices about their own lives is at the heart of sensible mental health policies.
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MHE calls for an improvement of living conditions by:

- **Creating a dynamic atmosphere:** let residents choose where to sit at table, what to wear, what kind of “work” he /she prefers.
 - **Providing direct payments:** these give people the power to take control over their own life and to choose the services they want. This is still a major problem for persons with mental health problems in nearly all European countries
 - **Making family and users aware of their rights** and including them in the process of de-institutionalisation as “real” players
 - **Building alliances with the media:** these have the opportunity to bring cases of violations and abuse in the spotlight and challenge policy-makers and professionals to initiate actions for change
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