



*The World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH), the Hellenic Psychiatric Association, the European Association working for Carers (EUROCARERS), the European Federation of Associations of Families of People with Mental Illness (EUFAMI), the European Psychiatric Association (EPA), the Global Alliance of Mental Illness Advocacy Networks (GAMIAN-Europe), the Association of Siblings of people with Mental Illness (KINAΨY), the Psychiatric Association for Eastern Europe and the Balkans (PAEEB), the Society of Preventive Psychiatry, the World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation (WAPR), the World Association for Social Psychiatry (WASP) co-sign the following statement*

## **ATHENS DECLARATION ON “LIVING WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA”**

Schizophrenia is a serious illness, starts early in life, affects 26 million people worldwide and more than half of the persons with this condition do not receive appropriate treatment. If neglected it can have serious consequences for the persons who suffer from it, for the people who care for these persons and for society as a whole.

In view of the above, the following facts should be considered:

- Prevention of schizophrenia (in its primary, secondary and tertiary degree), treatment (with biological, psychosocial and other methods) and health promotion are both possible and cost/effective.
- Recovery from schizophrenia is possible and rehabilitation of chronic institutionalized patients in the community can be achieved by most people.

We want to draw the attention of the global, regional and local authorities and organizations and the society as a whole to the above facts and urge them to:

- Take into account the degree of suffering associated with schizophrenia for the patients and their families

- Note that during periods of stress, like disasters, wars and financial crises vulnerable people are at risk of developing mental illness and people already suffering from it can experience relapse and exacerbation of their symptoms
- Consider the existing evidence that curtailing the funds of mental health services can have detrimental effects on persons predisposed for schizophrenia or persons who are already suffering from it.
- Call for support and advocacy of the persons who suffer from this painful and potentially self-destructive condition. People with schizophrenia receive less attention for their health, discontinuation of smoking strategies are less vigorous in their case, they rarely undergo angioplasty after a heart attack and they are not protected from developing a substance abuse disorder.
- Note that schizophrenia may be one of the most serious disorders in psychiatric nosology but with due person-centered care recovery is possible and the persons who suffer from it may lead a normal, fulfilling and productive life.

*Given in Athens on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2014  
(World Mental Health Day 2014)*