

**ΣΥΛΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΩΝ ΕΡΓΟΘΕΡΑΠΕΥΤΩΝ**  
**HELLENIC ASSOCIATION OF ERGOTHERAPISTS**



Ακαδημίας 91 - 93, 10677 τηλ/fax 2103228979  
91 - 93 Akadimias street Athens 10677 HELLAS  
url: <http://www.ergotherapists.gr> - e-mail: [info@ergotherapists.gr](mailto:info@ergotherapists.gr)

**STATEMENT**  
**OF THE**  
**HELLENIC ASSOCIATION OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS**

**With the support of**

**World Federation of Occupational Therapists**



**and the**

**Council of Occupational Therapists for the European Countries (COTEC)**



Taking into account:

- the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
- the Position Statement on Human Rights of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists
- the Green Paper «Improving the mental health of the population: Towards a strategy on mental health for the European Union», and
- the National Strategic Plan for the Psychiatric Reform in Greece «Psychargos 2010-2011», as it has been implemented over the previous years...

**we witness with regret, the increasingly dire situation of the public mental health services in Greece.**

More specifically:

- The 30 year process of mental health reform in Greece, which began with the financial support of the European Union and the exemplary effort of the state, of mental health professionals and of mental health service users and their families, is currently in danger!
- The national programme 'Psychargos' which laid a solid foundation based on common European policies for community care and inclusion for the mentally ill and other vulnerable social groups, is today in danger!
- The major steps taken in previous years in the mental health public sector and through the cooperation of state bodies and NGOs active in mental health, rather than promoting, expanding and consolidating the ongoing psychiatric reform in our country, are driven now into reversal and to decline!
- More than 210 structures and services for de-institutionalisation and community based rehabilitation (mobile units, day centers, and sheltered accommodation), that operate under the responsibility of NGOs, certified and functionally integrated into the public system for mental health, which serve more than 35000 people with mental health problems in our country, are in danger of closure!
- Their reduced funding, the cuts in their budget for 2011, and a forecasted equivalent cut in 2012, is leading to a reduction in their operations, putting in immediate danger the people with mental health problems whom they serve!

**The consequences are incalculable, not only for the service users themselves, but also for their families and the whole of Greek society**

According to statistics from recent studies (Skapinakis & Black, 2011), mental health problems are increasing. In combination with the economic inability of many residents of Greece to access private mental health services, we consider it vitally important that public services continue. Health is a public good and access to health care an inalienable right of citizens in a civil society.

The effectiveness of services can be assessed through the project to be undertaken by the established work group for the revision of the "Psychargos 2011-2020" (Ref DY1d/oik.122308/6/12/2010) of your Ministry.

Easily it will be evident that:

- coordinated policy and national planning of programmes, it is possible to enhance this very important area of health care, bypassing the problems of underfunding imposed by the current economic situation. Only in this way can the increased needs of society be met. Only in this way can the major problems Greek society is facing in the current economic crisis be met.

- community care empowers people to live in the community maintaining their contacts with their families, friends, work and community places, to recognize and strengthen their personal goals and their ability to promote their rehabilitation and social integration.

- proliferation of services in Greece and the raising of standards according to the needs of the population is a benefit for the economy and the stability of the country. Individuals with mental illness, who with appropriate professional support and education are enabled to become or remain productive in the open market, contributing to the family and society at large, without burdening the health and social systems with funding for disability pensions and allowances.

- developing social enterprises and designing appropriate employment programmes, people from vulnerable social groups are able to contribute to the productive economy, without costing the state budget through relapses and inpatient care.

**The profession of occupational therapy promotes the right to occupation, to treatment, to rehabilitation, and to the continued provision of mental health services in the community, emphasizing the vital need for people to engage in occupations which have meaning in their lives.**

Through social inclusion and the empowerment of human potential we can have a vision of robust, financially sound, healthy communities.

## **For the above reasons:**

**We request** you to review the extreme and immoral policies under implementation, which are leading to the anachronistic condemnation of thousands of mental health service users to an enclosed life in asylums.

**We request** you to provide appropriate solutions to the urgent need for the development, expansion and consolidation of the achievements to date in the public system of mental health services.

**Finally, and most fundamentally, we request** you to protect the human rights of Greek citizens both today and in the future and you can be assured that we will be active collaborators in any such effort.

Finally, we reiterate the words of Mr. S. Stylianides who, representing the World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation, wrote:

*"The rescue of the economy under these circumstances is inseparable from the preservation of our country and democracy and from the formulation a new collective ethos, both in Greece and Europe"*

For the Association

The President

The General Secretary

Kiriaki Keramiotou

Mary Karabetsou