

FOUNDING TEXT OF THE OBSERVATORY' S PRINCIPLES FOR THE RIGHTS IN MENTAL HEALTH

The managing forms of the mental, social or other deviation consist one of the most important indicators of a society's culture. In the modern west cultural model, in which we think Greek society is part of, mental and social deviation is faced with fear, suspicion and responses of violence and exclusion of the people who deviate, from the social goods, in which the remaining citizens have access. The mental pain and the mental experiences which deviate from the average are socially reduced to a specific form of illness, which unlike all of the others is considered not to be subjected to the mental control of the person who has it, and its management is assigned to systems of social control and suppression, which are incompatible both with the concepts of illness and therapy. So, in practice, it is often converted to an offense , for which the suffering subject "is punished" from the society and the respectively organized mental health system, with an almost obvious invalidation of his/her speech, personality, capacities, wishes, dreams, personal and social rights and control over his/her own life. Although in the last years legislation has been introduced, which appears to attempt a protection of these persons from extreme forms of social violence, in practice this is not achieved.

We, who are co-signing the following text, state our opposition to the above rationale, which based in the ignorance and fear of the citizens, cultivates an atmosphere of social racism against so-called mentally suffering people, which is instituted through the mental health system. We consider that:

- The concept of personal and social rights of the citizens, whether they become at some point of their lives users of the psychosocial services, or not, has some validity over and above the scientific or other interpretative theories, and this can't become an object for negotiation.
- The violation of these rights consists violence, personal and social, against the people, whose rights are violated.
- The existing mental health system is largely structured in a way that produces and reproduces such forms of violence through the main policy and existential invalidation of its users, but also through specific daily practices, inside and outside the hospitalizing institutions.
- This frame of supporting violence affects inevitably, although with different masks, not only the users of the services, but their families too, as well as the workers in the respective institutions, when they are forced by their working frame to violate their fellowmen's rights who find themselves in life crises. In this sense, the whole society is also affected, covering in her arms legislated samples of violence, ignorance and exclusion of her weakest members. This is directly considered to offend the morals and the culture of the whole society.
- As sensitized and conscientious citizens we don't want to remain outlookers of this situation, exorcizing the evil and hoping that this will "always concern someone else". The violation of human rights concerns all of us.

According to the above and the belief that the modification of the social awareness results only from an attitude of collective realization and social solidarity towards people, who decide to claim their personal and social rights – whether they are users of

psychosocial services, whether they work in them, whether they are interested citizens or group initiatives, today, Tuesday 6 June 2006, in Thessaloniki we proceed in the founding of the

“Observatory for the Rights in Mental Health”

FORM

The Observatory works in the form of a people's network, who are in any way interested or involved in the mental health system. It is a network of users of psychosocial services, of users' relatives, of mental health professionals and workers in this area, of sensitive citizens etc. Anyone who shares its philosophy and aims is welcomed in the bosom of the network.

The central action keystone of the Observatory lies in the general meetings of its members, in which after any member's suggestions, themes are put into discussion, actions are organized and evaluated and organizing issues, which concern the function of the Observatory itself, are settled.

The Observatory rejects any form of financial support through the psychopharmacological industry.

OBSERVATORY'S AIMS

- The beginning of a public conversation in relation to the social management of mental pain.
- The modification of the prevalent social opinion about mental health and the so-called mental disorder.
- The formalization of the public on matters of user's and worker's rights in the mental health system.
- The resistance to the rationale of institutionalization, of social exclusion, of the exercise of every form of violence and of the violation of human rights in mental health.
- The contribution to the development of alternative forms of the social management of the mental pain.
- The defense and expansion of the mental sufferer's rights in and out of the mental health system's structures.
- The promotion of the participation of the users of psychosocial services in all the decision making levels, that concern their lives.
- The promotion of the belief that the family members of the reported as “mentally sufferers” are individuals directly concerned, and deserve equal attention, support and inclusion of their opinion along with the rest involved individuals.

OBSERVATORY'S ACTIONS

In the Observatory information-observations will be gathered concerning:

- incidences of abuse towards the hospitalized individuals in public and private mental health structures,

- cases of violation of the rights of the users or ex users of mental health services, of their relatives, as well as the rights of the workers in this area
- incidents and speculations/thoughts about ethical issues and also
- deficits of the mental health system.

This information, whether it concerns complaints, or simple reports or observations, can be derived either by the directly interested individual, or by someone who was informed about the irregularity, or by any other person.

This information can :

- just be collected systematized, for future use
- be used in the sense of statistics to support interventions in mental health, when and if this will be considered useful from the General Meeting
- have more specialized use, in the sense of support for example of one request of the interested people
- or whatever the General Meeting of that time decides, after any member's suggestion.

In case of any information's further use, a consent is initially necessary to be ensured, of both the one who has made the observation and of the one whom this observation personally concerns. Prerequisite for the undertaking of action of any kind is these individuals to consent, to actively participate, to jointly shape and decide in every stage of the information's management.

The special management of the information-observation and the specific action undertaken will be regulated by procedures, which the general meeting will have determined and which will potentially be subjected constantly in revision according to the following decision of the general meeting, after any Observatory's member's suggestion.

The actions that are undertaken in the context of the Observatory according to the principles of the founding text and the decisions of the general meetings, can be

- a) individual
- b) team actions, by a number of members, who are interested in the specific issue
or
- c) collective, in the sense of a plenary session.

Every action should be announced and discussed in the general meeting. In special occasions, wherever it is considered that this would excessively slow down the procedures, in an initial phase **a unanimous consent of all the co-ordinating committee's members** (see the next paragraph), which will be confirmed or not by the next general meeting.

The organizational details concerning the action will be decided by the general meeting of that time, after any member's suggestion.

ORGANIZATION-FUNCTION

Members of the Observatory can become individuals, that agree with the Observatory's principles and philosophy, that participate in the collectiveness as such, regardless of their accession in other collective schemas.

The typical **accession of a new member** in the Observatory is accomplished by the co-signing of the Principles' Text.

As fundamental **obligations** are defined a) their regular presence in the general meetings, b) their active participation in the Observatory's actions c) the categorical information of the general meeting for their potential withdrawal from the Observatory, in case the first basic prerequisite can not be kept (regular presence in the general meetings).

The Observatory functions based on the principle of **the direct democracy** and **the unconditional parity** among its members.

Any decision making, both on the level of organization and the philosophy of the Observatory, will be taken by the General Meeting after any interested person's suggestion, based on the **principle of Unanimity-Consent**.

A **Coordinating Committee** of 3 members will be elected by the General Meeting for a duration of one year, which 1) will be informed of all the actions and will coordinate them organizationally 2) will gather, factionalize and notify the incoming information to all the Observatory's member and will keep a full record 3) will organize and call the general meetings

The Committee's members will be obliged to account for their action in every general meeting and in any given time, provided that such thing will be requested by a certain member of the Observatory, and have to present an account of the action in the end of their term. They are also in any given time revocable with a decision of the general meeting, whether after their own request, or after another member's request.

All the above points, concerning the Observatory's organizational issues are potentially constantly subjected to a review with a following decision of the general meeting, after a suggestion of any Observatory's member.

Thessaloniki, 6 June 2006