

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF HEALTH DANA JURASKOVA–  
EVENING SOCIAL EVENT ON 28.5.2009**

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues,

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to be able to welcome you to Prague at the international seminar entitled "Destigmatisation and Improving the Quality of Psychiatric Care", which is one of the official accompanying events of the Czech EU presidency and is being held under the auspices of the Directorate General Health and Consumers of the European Commission as well as the Ministry of Health.

This international seminar will focus special attention on the goals of modern psychiatric care in health systems, improvement of the quality of psychiatric care, and destigmatisation of mental illness and those afflicted by it.

I am pleased that besides representatives of the professional public and the state administration from the Czech Republic, the seminar is also being attended by representatives of the EU Member States who are involved in the issue of psychiatry, representatives of the regional offices of WHO for Europe, DG SANCO, the World Psychiatric Association and both Czech and foreign non-state organisations.

I believe that tomorrow's expert conference will be of benefit to one and all, and that you will exchange with one another the useful experience that you have gained in your work with psychiatric patients.

I wish you a pleasant evening.

**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER – SEMINAR OPENING ON 29.5.2009**

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues,

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to be able to welcome you to Prague at the international seminar entitled "Destigmatisation and Improving the Quality of Psychiatric Care", which is one of the official accompanying events of the Czech EU presidency and is being held under the auspices of the Directorate General Health and Consumers of the European Commission as well as the Ministry of Health.

Mental disorders are a significant health, social and economic problem that, unfortunately, continues to grow. Like development of psychiatric care, support of the population's mental health is one of the priorities of European policies, including the EU and WHO.

Contemporary care of psychiatric patients offers a wide range of services comprising both healthcare and social care. In order for this care to be accessible in all its forms and in the highest quality to all citizens of the European Union, joint action by the Member States, coordination and mutual consultation will be necessary.

The issue of mental health and illnesses has a significant societal dimension. Efforts towards ensuring that the population is in good mental health must be a result of

dynamic and mutually complementary collaboration among all the parties involved. Much attention must be paid to prevention of mental disorders in all the age and risk groups. This topic is constantly gaining significance in connection with the ageing population - some experts are even talking about an epidemic. The topic thereby becomes significant in economic terms for health as well as social systems and employment policy. Of no less significance is the requirement for social integration of mental patients, which is fulfilled across the Member States to very varying degrees.

In the field of healthcare, it is absolutely essential that we focus on the quality of psychiatric care. The Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic is greatly supportive of this process and is working hard to produce methodology to create healthcare standards across all branches of medicine. Ten specimen standards have come into being this year that can now be used by individual professional organisations to create standards of their own.

It is also necessary that we focus on the area of human rights, since psychiatric patients represent a group that is considerably vulnerable in respect of both the approach to healthcare and in respect of social services and all human rights. Stigmatisation is a momentous topic in the field of psychiatry. There are many positive examples of how we can fight against stigmatisation of psychiatry, but this fight must be intensified and new ways of communicating with the public must be found in order for it to grasp the fact that mental illness concerns every one of us and for it to have a better approach towards psychiatric patients and a better relationship with them.

We have tried to conceive the conference as a slightly confrontational one, and I would like to thank the DG Health and Consumers of the European Commission for their valuable comments during the conference preparations. We consider that confrontation between the new and old EU Member States in the field of psychiatric illness and the approach to it are the path to reconciliation. It is necessary that we see the differences in order to remove them, and to see positive examples in order to follow them. Therein lies the added value of European collaboration.

Besides representatives of the professional public and the state administration from the Czech Republic, the seminar is also being attended by representatives of the EU Member States who are involved in the issue of psychiatry, representatives of the regional offices of WHO for Europe, representatives of DG Health and Consumers and DG Employment of the European Commission, the World Psychiatric Association, universities of the Member States and both Czech and foreign non-state organisations, who will be contributing today.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my sincere wish that this expert conference proves of benefit both to your work and to your patients.

Dana Juraskova

Minister of Health of the Czech Republic