Brussels, November 20, 2026

GAMIAN-Europe statement on the death of Kristian Josip Peris

PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

No more coercion: GAMIAN-Europe calls for justice for Kristian Josip Peris and an end to coercion in psychiatric care

Brussels, 20 November 2026 – The Global Alliance of Mental Illness Advocacy Networks (GAMIAN-Europe) is deeply shocked and saddened by the death of Kristian Josip Peris, a 32-year-old man who died while a patient at a psychiatric hospital in Zagreb, Croatia.

Mr Peris was admitted to hospital in a psychotic state, at a time when he needed care, safety and support. Instead, footage made public shows him strapped to a bed while staff restrained him by force. Four nurses have been arrested on suspicion of aggravated murder, and the Croatian health ministry has reported irregularities in the case.

Our thoughts are with Mr Peris's family and friends, and with everyone in Croatia who has been shaken by his death.

Coercion is not care

The investigation must be allowed to run its course, and those responsible must be held to account. But this is not only about the actions of individuals. A death like this points to a wider failure: a culture in which force, restraint and fear are still treated as an acceptable part of psychiatric treatment.

People living with mental illness have the same right to dignity, safety and respect as any other patient. Restraint and seclusion cause lasting harm and trauma, damage trust in services and keep people away from the help they need. People who have been through coercive treatment can become afraid to seek care again.

GAMIAN-Europe is clear: coercion in psychiatric care must be addressed. Physical and mechanical restraint and seclusion are violations of human dignity and fundamental rights. They are not treatment, and they must not be accepted as a normal part of mental health care anywhere in Europe.

The argument that coercion is sometimes unavoidable has been used for too long to justify practices that harm people. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the WHO Quality Rights approach show that rights-based, person-centred alternatives exist and work. What is missing is the

political will to put them in place. Every day of delay means more people are harmed in places that should keep them safe.

What we are calling for

"As a Croatian, I am heartbroken and angry that this happened in my own country. Kristian Josip Peris went to hospital to get better, and he did not come home. Croatia must face this honestly. We owe it to him to make sure no one else suffers in the same way. That means ending coercion in our psychiatric hospitals. I call on the Croatian government to lead this change, and to show Europe that it can be done," said **Tin Pongrac, President of GAMIAN-Europe, on behalf of the Board**.

"What happened in Zagreb must be a turning point, not only for Croatia but for all of Europe. Coercive practices still happen in psychiatric services across the continent, often out of sight. People with lived experience have been warning about this for years. Now is the time to listen and act, with clear plans, independent oversight and real investment in care that does not rely on force," added **Nigel Olisa, Executive Director of GAMIAN-Europe**.

GAMIAN-Europe calls on:

1. **The Croatian government** to review the use of restraint and seclusion in all psychiatric facilities in the country, and to publish the findings.

2. **All European governments and health services** to commit to ending coercive practices, with binding plans and timelines, independent monitoring, public reporting of every use of restraint and seclusion, and investment in staff training and non-coercive alternatives.

3. **The European Union** to make ending coercion in mental health care a clear priority. As a party to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the EU has a duty to act. It should set common standards across Member States, monitor and report on the use of coercion every year, and use EU funding to support non-coercive, community-based alternatives. What happened in Zagreb can happen anywhere in Europe, and the EU cannot stand by.

4. **Health services everywhere** to involve people with lived experience and their families in designing and monitoring care.

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Notes to editors

About GAMIAN-Europe

GAMIAN-Europe (Global Alliance of Mental Illness Advocacy Networks-Europe) is a non-profit, patient-driven pan-European organisation. It represents the interests of people affected by mental ill-health and advocates for their rights. Its main objectives are advocacy, information and education, destigmatisation, co-operation, partnerships and capacity building. Find out more at www.gamian.eu.

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