



Mental Health Europe's (MHE) proposal for the 2020 cycle of Thematic Networks under the EU Health Policy Platform

➤ Scope of future Joint Statement

The Joint Statement will provide advice and recommendations for education and training to encourage task shifting within the health workforce and the role that peer-workers could play in this process.

➤ Relevance of the proposal and synergy with EU actions on health in the European Union

In the past decades, health policies have started to acknowledge the centrality of engaging service (ex)users in the design and delivery of services and policies. In some fields in particular, such as mental health or chronic diseases, person-centred services and peer-run initiatives are becoming more and more prolific. In some countries, this has led to an uptake of peers as an integral part of the healthcare system and as someone who can meaningfully contribute with their unique lived experience.

Many countries have also witnessed a worrying shortage of healthcare professionals and the development of the so-called “medical deserts”. This is becoming an urgent reality in many Member States of the European Union (EU), leading to conversations on education and training to encourage task shifting within the healthcare sector with an overarching aim of providing better care in ways that are more responsive to the needs of users. As an example, this topic is becoming of increasing interest for the work of the [Expert Panel on effective ways of investing in Health \(EXPH\)](#).

Our Joint Statement will focus on these two trends and on how the potential of one (the increasing relevance of peers and peer workers) could provide a solution to the other (innovative task shifting in healthcare systems).

Besides being of relevance for the above-mentioned reasons, the Joint Statement will also be in synergy with other EU actions on health, as well as touch upon and contribute to EU initiatives in other fields. First of all, it will not only complement the work of the EXPH, but it will also feed into the ongoing work done by the European Commission to improve the resilience of healthcare systems and to develop sustainable solutions at EU level to ensure sufficient numbers of adequately trained health professionals with the right skills to provide care to all who need it.

Secondly, this Joint Statement will contribute to the delivery of principles under the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) – particularly the principles on education, training and life-long learning, health, long-term care and disability. It will also feed into the commitment that the EU and its Member States have made to address current global challenges and leave no one behind through the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) – i.e. SDG3 on health and well-being, SDG4 on education and lifelong learning opportunities, as well as SDG1 on ending poverty and SDG10 on reducing inequalities, all inherent aspects of “medical deserts”.

On a final note, focusing on the role of peers, their recognition and meaningful contribution will also be in line with the human rights commitments made by the EU and its Member States. Involving persons with lived experience in the design and delivery of services and policies is at the heart of the [United Nations](#)

[Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(UN CRPD\)](#), which sees individuals' experiences as added values to bring positive changes in society.

➤ Links with the EU Health Policy agenda

The Joint Statement will have a direct link with:

- The work of the Expert Panel on effective ways of investing in Health (EXPH);
- [Commission Communication on effective, accessible and resilient health systems](#);
- The [European Framework for Action on Mental Health and Wellbeing](#).

➤ Objectives

The objectives of the Joint Statement will be to:

- Provide concrete recommendations to the European Commission on its policy activities related to task-shifting within the health workforce and tackle shortages of medical professionals;
- Advise stakeholders on activities that could complement the work of the European Commission;
- Highlight the importance of education and training of the health workforce, the sustainability of health systems, and the contribution that peer and peer workers can provide;
- Provide data on peer workers and shortages of healthcare professionals, including the current positive and negative trends;
- Ensure that the voice of peers is reflected in all the relevant policies and guidance at EU level.

An initial desk research will provide information on the state of play and inform on challenges and needs, as well as opportunities and practices. The Joint Statement will be designed and drafted collaboratively with stakeholders using this information as a baseline. Stakeholders will meet – either in person or online – throughout the year. These meetings will serve to present the current state of work, receive feedback, reach consensus and move forward.

➤ Possible network and partners

MHE will involve its broad and diverse network, particularly its Task Force on Social Policy (which includes experts on the topic of the Joint Statement) and its members working with or representing peer workers. Given the broad reach of the proposal, we can also expect input and engagement of other partners from various fields. In particular, from the health sector, partners could include (but are not limited to) the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA), EuroHealthNet and the Standing Committee of European Doctors. From the peers' side, networks that might be interested in collaborating are the European Disability Forum (EDF), the European Network on Independent Living (ENIL), the European Network of (ex)users and survivors of psychiatry (ENUSP), the European Patients' Forum (EPF), Inclusion Europe and Autism Europe. Networks representing service providers are the European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD), the European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR) and the European Social Network (ESN).

➤ Leading organisation

The leading organisation will be [Mental Health Europe \(MHE\)](#). MHE is the largest European independent network organisation representing mental health users, professionals and service providers across Europe. We represent more than seventy organisations in thirty countries beyond the European Union. For nearly 35 years, we have been actively promoting mental health and wellbeing in Europe, advocating for the human rights of mental health service users, persons with psychosocial disabilities, their families and carers at European level.

➤ Contact person and details

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