



# The EU 'Healthier Together' Non-Communicable Diseases Initiative

Reducing the burden of non-communicable diseases

## EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF PSYCHOLOGISTS ASSOCIATIONS

### BACKGROUND

*Provide the rationale and background for your proposed action including challenges and enablers.*

Seven priority points around mental health are proposed to help promote well-being and ensure access to quality care. They emphasise the importance of integrating mental health into all policies and services, advocating for evidence-based practices, and prioritising prevention and early intervention. Additionally, an emphasis is placed on the need to address the various social determinants of mental health and involve people with lived experience in decision-making processes. These points underscore the importance of a comprehensive and integrated approach to mental health that addresses both individual and societal factors.

### CONCRETE ACTION

▪ Idea:

▪ *What are the objectives and the scope of the action?*

- The establishment and implementation of a comprehensive and unified EU mental health strategy.
- The strategy should contain several pillars that act as scaffolding to help support and unify diverse efforts on the ground.
- It should be aligned with WHO's call for more community-oriented services.

*How will this  
action support  
the prevention  
of non-  
communicable  
diseases in the  
EU?*

▪ EU added value and impact:

▪ *What is the EU added value and impact of the action?*

- The European Commission's initiatives around mental health to date are valuable and welcomed.
- However, due to the vast scope of the topic of mental health, a challenge is created in identifying how best to collate these efforts and find a clear path forward.
- Trying to prioritise all topics at a policy level is unlikely to be possible. On the other hand, taking too narrow an approach would lead to the response not being comprehensive enough and may arbitrarily exclude important factors that contribute to wellbeing.
- A solution is to establish a comprehensive and unified EU mental health strategy that revolves around several key pillars that act as scaffolding to help support and unify various existing and suggested initiatives.
- These pillars can then act as anchor points for cooperation and communication between related initiatives. They can stimulate the development of national action plans. Pillar-specific indicators can be set and funding allocated.
- This strategy would ideally be associated with an EU Year of Mental Health in order to help give the process a recognisable identity and vibrancy.

## CHALLENGES AND ENABLERS

- *Which issues will your action address on health promotion and prevention of non-communicable diseases in particular related to health determinants, or socio-economic, environmental, commercial determinants of health?*

Seven pillars of an EU mental health strategy are proposed:

- **1. Commitment to mental health in all policies:**  
A focus on mental health and its social determinants should feature in all EU policies. It should address the foundations of development in childhood and across the lifespan. It should be properly funded, resourced and measured.
- **2. Mental health as a core part of societal crises responses:**  
Mental health should be a core part of any response to current and future societal crises.

*How will it target specific challenges, and are there any enablers that can*

- **3. Community-oriented mental health services:**  
WHO's call for more community-oriented mental health services should be supported. Services should focus on providing suitable support for those who need it, in particular to vulnerable groups.
- **4. Mental wellbeing in the workplace:**  
Mental health in the workplace should be a priority, as demonstrated by recent research e.g. the H-WORK project.
- **5. The impact of climate change on mental health especially for the young:**  
Support programmes—for children and young people especially—should be introduced in settings such as schools.
- **6. Mental health training standards and regulation:**  
Mental health practitioner training should be based on a recognised standard, properly funded, and regulated in the EU.
- **7. Equality of access to mental health including digitalisation:**  
Citizens should be engaged as partners and have equal access to appropriate and high-quality mental healthcare. Digital and physical contexts should receive equal consideration.

*take your  
action  
forward?*

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- *Provide your views on how your organisation can be involved and help in taking this idea forward.*

- The European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA) is the umbrella organisation in Europe for national psychologists' associations. EFPA sets a European standard of education, professional training, and competence in psychology—EuroPsy.
- EFPA has proposed that the above seven pillars form the basis of a unified and comprehensive EU mental health strategy. They draw on existing workstreams and can be further refined in collaboration with other stakeholders and serve as a supportive identity and structure for mental health initiatives.
- EFPA's member associations throughout Europe have psychologists on the ground throughout the community. They can be found working in healthcare, universities, workplaces, schools, prisons and in private practice among other settings.
- EFPA can promote a comprehensive European strategy across our member countries, supporting them in implementation and assessment. Existing mechanisms can be used to facilitate peer

*What can  
your  
organisation  
do to put  
this idea in  
place?*

support among countries to share good practice and manage any challenges.

- A unified and comprehensive approach to mental health would give visibility to important work already happening, by the community more broadly as well as by practitioners, and help create a framework through which gaps can be identified and filled. Newer initiatives can benefit from situating themselves within this ecosystem.