



Shining a light on mental health:

youth policy dialogue with Commissioner Stella Kyriakides on a comprehensive approach to mental health

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“You cannot separate physical health from mental health, you need to care for people in a holistic way”

Commissioner Stella Kyriakides

- 1. Mental health is an important element of the European Health Union that affects everyone.** Different people face different mental health challenges at different stages of their lives for different reasons: this needs to be considered in the comprehensive approach. For example, cancer patients should have free, easy access to psychosocial support and people with disabilities require targeted support to overcome barriers to information, diagnosis and support.
- 2. Young people should be part of the development and implementation of policies related to mental health,** especially as they face significant challenges during transition periods in their lives. The mental health of young people is impacted by all decisions made by the EU, requiring a “mental health in all policies” approach. In the face of rising living costs and the risk of poverty, it is essential that young people have equitable access to stable, employment with fair working conditions.
- 3. Mental health challenges have been exacerbated by the COVID19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine,** where the most vulnerable often suffer the most. Training, teaching and education is an essential element of accepting differences and creating safe environments, spaces and communities where people can speak out about their struggles. Nurses working on the frontlines need dedicated training and support structures. There is also a need to invest in mental health services in Ukraine now, as mental health and anxiety-related illnesses are likely to follow later.
- 4. There is too much stigma surrounding mental health,** even though mental health issues can affect everyone. We need more awareness raising that takes cultural differences into account, but no need to start from scratch. There are many good practices, often led by young volunteers, which could be built on and developed.
- 5. Good mental wellbeing and preventative measures are essential, but accessible and affordable mental health support should also be available to all who need it.** This requires qualified psychologists who are trained to work with young people, vulnerable groups and those facing specific challenges. This needs to involve schools, universities and workplaces.

