



## **Meeting minutes**

### **Second meeting of the drafting group on stigma and discrimination on mental health, under the Public Health Expert Group (PHEG)**

**28 February 2024**

DG SANTE and Finland co-chaired an online meeting of the drafting group on stigma and discrimination under the Expert Group on Public Health with the participation of the representatives of 9 Member States.

#### **Welcome**

DG SANTE opened the meeting by welcoming participants and introduced the agenda, which was adopted without any changes.

#### **Update on Lancet Commission work**

The representative of the Czechia presented the work of the Lancet Commission on ending stigma and discrimination in the realm of mental health. The Lancet Commission's adopted definitions of stigma and discrimination were shared as well as the need to make a clear distinction between both concepts. Furthermore, findings from a comprehensive global survey of 45 countries conducted by the Lancet Commission were described. The results revealed the pressing need for national governments to allocate resources to sustained, long-term stigma programmes, as stigma and discrimination can be worse than the impact of the mental health condition itself.

The Member States discussed the influence of media and its positive and negative consequences on people affected by mental health issues. The Lancet Commission's study concentrated solely on the impact of traditional media in disseminating stigma and discrimination against individuals with mental health issues. More research would be needed on the impact of social media.

From the work of the Lancet Commission, the key insights were: addressing discrimination against individuals with mental health problems by tackling unfair behaviours and actions rather than merely preventing negative attitudes and beliefs; the need to invest in enhancing mental health literacy was underlined, particularly among the general population and children/adolescents, which might also alleviate pressure on specialised mental health services; low mental health literacy often contributes to negative attitudes, beliefs, and stigmatisation, reinforcing the need for widespread awareness and education.

#### **Presentation of preliminary mapping of Member States' actions**

The preliminary outcomes of the mapping of ongoing and planned activities on stigma and discrimination in EU27 and Norway and Iceland were presented. It is the first step towards a comprehensive mapping of national policies, campaigns and practices. The work was done via desk research, including by consulting the reports by international organisations such as the WHO, the Lancet Commission, and the OECD. An overview was given of relevant practices, identified following last year's call for best and promising practices on mental health.

## **Tour de table**

A tour de table took place during which Member States shared their views on the next steps for the drafting group:

- Austria recommended preparing a paper focused on stigma.
- Bulgaria supported Austria's suggestion and suggested to focus on health workforce as this group is particularly affected by stigma and discrimination.
- Czechia asked for clarification on whether the groups' activities primarily target negative attitudes and beliefs or also encompass stigma and discrimination.
- Finland called for collaboration with stakeholders and emphasised that the group's scope of work should encompass both stigma and discrimination.
- The Netherlands emphasised the importance of defining clear objectives for the group's work.
- Slovakia urged a stronger focus on stigma in the mental health sector.
- Sweden stressed the importance of clearly defining the scope and objectives and supported the organisation of a workshop.

Based on the opinions expressed by the members of the drafting group, it was agreed that a workshop will be organised to guide the development of the paper and further details its concept and focus. Stakeholders, international organisations and other Commission services may be invited. This would allow the drafting group members to have a more thorough discussion on the concepts of stigma and discrimination as well as the available or needed EU-level tools that may be helpful for Member States to address these issues.

## **AOB**

The co-chairs reminded the dates of the upcoming meetings and then closed the meeting thanking the participants for the active participation and valuable discussions.