



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Health systems, medical products and innovation
Performance of national health systems

Expert Panel on effective ways of investing in health

Drafting group meeting on Mental health of health workforce and other essential workers (Virtual meeting)

4 February 2021

Minutes

1. Approval of the agenda

The agenda was approved without changes.

2. Nature of the meeting

The first drafting group meeting on Mental health of health workforce and other essential workers took place on 4 February 2021 via MS Teams. The meeting, which was chaired by Prof. Pedro Pita Barros, Chair of the drafting group, was a non-public meeting.

No declarations of interest that could in any way interfere with the topic discussed were submitted from any member.

3. List of points discussed

Content of the mandate

The mandate was circulated prior to the meeting. COM stressed that it is a very topical and important matter which is high on the Commission agenda. COM informed the members on the work being done in the framework of the Steering Group on Health Promotion, Disease Prevention and Management of Non-Communicable Diseases (SGPP), on co-funded joint actions on best practices. These best practices can be found on the dedicated Best Practice Portal. The work undertaken by the Health Policy Platform's stakeholder group on mental health in the context of COVID-19 was also referred to. It was stressed that it is important to take advantage of the already existing knowledge and experience, to create synergies and to avoid duplication.

Chair and rapporteurs presented the suggested structure that follows the questions from mandate:

- 1.) What are the specific factors influencing mental health of the health workforce and essential workers?
- 2.) What interventions could be effective in addressing mental health support needs of health workers and essential workers, including those with pre-existing mental health conditions? What are the conditions for the delivery of these interventions in a cost-effective, affordable and inclusive manner? Using existing data, assess the cost of mental health problems in the health workforce and the cost-effectiveness of mental health interventions.
- 3.) How can the EU address these concerns?

Members discussed the building blocks around the proposed outline, the definition of mental health as well as how to define health workforce and group other essential workers. Some members suggested division of workers into categories, i.e. based on the level of exposure to risk of infection. It was mentioned as important to integrate also social care workers and informal carers taking into account the societal impact of the syndemic.

Members debated the factors influencing mental health and emphasised the importance of psychosocial wellbeing and that mental health is not just a psychiatric or psychological disorder.

Members elaborated on interventions to address mental health support needs, effectiveness of interventions in mental health field and conditions for delivery of cost-effective, affordable, inclusive interventions. They agreed it is important to identify interventions delivered at societal, organisational, team, and individual levels by means of psychosocial support services, primary care, community care, occupational health programs, and e-Health. Key facilitators and barriers of implementing the interventions were also mentioned.

They emphasised that recommendations would be targeted to EU policy makers, national policy makers, senior managers in sectors with high shares of essential workers, mental health and occupational health practitioners.

Planning and organisation of the work in the drafting group

Members confirmed Prof. Pedro Pita Barros as a chair of the drafting group and Dr Heather Rogers and Dr Jelka Zaletel as co-rapporteurs.

Schedule for the opinion and the drafting group meetings

Drafting group members agreed on the following schedule:

Discussion and reporting on ongoing work in plenaries: 10 February, 28 April

Drafting group meetings: 5 March, 15 March, 16 April, 10 May (dates to be confirmed)

Public hearing: June

Finalisation and publishing of the opinion: July

4. Conclusion

The members agreed to provide their initial contribution to the outline and report to the Panel in the upcoming plenary meeting. The Chair and rapporteurs thanked everyone for active participation and valuable discussion to move forward with the opinion.

5. Next meeting

The draft opinion will be discussed in the next plenary meeting on 10 February 2021 via MS Teams.

6. List of participants

EXPH Members

DE MAESENEER Jan
GARCIA-ALTES Anna
KRINGOS Dionne
LIONIS Christos
MCKEE Martin
MURAUŠKIENE Liubove
PITA BARROS Pedro
ROGERS Heather-Lynn
SICILIANI Luigi
STAHL Dorothea
WIECZOROWSKA-TOBIS Katarzyna
ZACHAROV Sergej
ZALETEL Jelka

Researcher

BLYTHE Jenny

COM

PRADALIE Nicholas (SG)
BIGDELI Leyla (EMPL)
TAMSMA Nicoline (SANTE)
MATTHEWS Maya (SANTE)
DAJKA Bela (SANTE)
VOLOSINOVA Viera (SANTE)