



Stakeholder event – A comprehensive approach to mental health

21st April 2023

Overview of posters submitted by stakeholders

The following 22 posters were submitted by stakeholders following an open request for concrete ideas for action on mental health from stakeholders to support the Commission's work on a comprehensive approach to mental health.

They have not been endorsed by and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.



Prevention and promotion



FROM CONFLICTS TO LEARNING VITAL SPACES - E-YOUTH PROJECT

[\(https://eyouthproject.wordpress.com/\)](https://eyouthproject.wordpress.com/)

BACKGROUND

Sometimes, young people have difficulties to manage their emotions and to tolerate the frustration. These problems can generate conflicts with their families, friends and with their community. When these difficulties are frequent, given environments poorly adapted, youngsters can experience distressing and depressive feelings and suffer other emotional ups and downs. It is crucial to understand how such experiences derive in their community exclusion that, at the same time, get worse their negative emotions and conflicts creating a destructive spiral of isolation.

CONCRETE ACTION

The E-YOUTH project –specifically this proposal- aims to develop a methodology to identify and prevent early mental health problems through the conflicts that young people have daily with their environment. The European consortium, led by Support-Girona, considers that the conflicts are scenarios where youngsters can learn to manage their emotions and acquire strategies to resolve problems peacefully. In these “Conflict Scenarios”, the participants can establish social bonds based on the mutual respect, support, and human rights.

How will this help to strengthen action on mental health at EU level and enhance the mental health of European citizens?

IMPLEMENTATION

- Identify “Conflict Scenarios” and create “Vital Learning Spaces”

The consortium will develop methods to identify community conflicts and to promote that its protagonists (youngsters, families, and neighbourhood actors) look for a solution collaboratively with their support services. The professionals of support will teach to build a “Vital Learning Space” from the conflict. This means detecting if young people, their families, and neighbours need to develop skills to manage their emotions, to communicate their interests and to respect the objectives of the others. In any case, the “Vital Learning Spaces” will be focus on:

- (a) the roots of the conflict,
- (b) the needs, rights, actions, and expectations and
- (c) the skills to develop to transform the “Conflict Scenario” into a collaborative scenario.

- Tackle “Complex Needs” and build Independent Living Projects

The skills that young people should acquire to resolve their conflicts and achieve their goals set up certain “Complex Needs”. To prevent negative connotations and to increase the proactivity of youngsters, the mental health problems will be defined as “actions or skills to” rather than a mere set of symptoms. Thus, young people will recognize their circumstances and will plan how to overcome their difficulties. The “Conflict Scenarios”, rebuilt as collaborative learning spaces, will determine how young people can develop social skills and how their environment could support them, establishing Independent Living Projects.

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



PROMOTION OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND LIFESTYLE EDUCATION FOR PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF DEPRESSION IN ADOLESCENTS THROUGH PHYSIOTHERAPY PROGRAMMES

- **WORLD PHYSIOTHERAPY (EUROPEAN REGION)** (erwcpt.eu)

BACKGROUND

Physiotherapy in mental health is focused on the promotion, prevention, and treatment of mental health disorders, such as depression, through a person-centered approach to achieve personal and lifestyle changes with the use of biopsychosocial and holistic techniques. These physiotherapeutic modalities empower individuals towards greater independence and self-management of personal health and wellbeing. A sedentary and inactive lifestyle is one of the major issues regarding mental health. Significant links have been found between greater amounts of sedentary behaviour and both increased psychological ill-being (i.e., depression) and lower psychological well-being (i.e. satisfaction with life and happiness) in children and adolescents. Promoting physical activity is essential for the wellbeing of the population in general and in particular in adolescents and children, as physical activity patterns tend to track into subsequent adulthood. Scientific evidence shows a wide range of effectiveness of physical activity, body awareness therapies and body-mind exercises. Physical activity shows positive effects on symptoms of mental illness, quality of life and/or physical health even at levels of activity below the public health recommendations. Research shows that it can also be a viable adjunct treatment in combination with antidepressants.

CONCRETE ACTION

- **Idea:**

Promotion of physical activity and lifestyle education for prevention and treatment of depression in adolescents. This will be achieved through the creation of guidelines and recommendations which will include the prescription of therapeutic exercise to adolescents suffering from depression via supervised and guided group exercise physiotherapy programmes of moderate aerobic intensity.

- **EU added value and potential benefits:**

Physiotherapy in mental health uses psychologically based approaches which are drug free, non-invasive, secure and with low risks of side effects that may be delivered in individual or group settings. It ensures equity and accessibility to healthcare and decreases stigma. These treatments are evidence based, cost-effective and manageable. In addition to this, it is an environmentally friendly healthcare alternative which addresses the social part of care such as lifestyle behaviours and functionality within the workplace. Physiotherapy has a pivotal role on support programmes for adolescents, improving access to

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mental healthcare of these patients and most importantly improving their compliance to treatment which has a direct effect on quality of life with a positive economic and social impact both at national and EU level. Physiotherapy interventions can be implemented in any social and economic condition making it a universal tool. Our value is the prescription of therapeutic exercise as an effective treatment for depression and other mental health disorders. The new challenges of our society put us in front of situations that challenge EU population's mental health as climate change, pandemics, wars or other human or natural catastrophes. There is a direct correlation between post-traumatic stress, anxiety and depression, and therapeutic exercise is an effective treatment in all these conditions.

CHALLENGES

Young people are more vulnerable to suffer from mental health problems derived from the misuse of technologies and sedentary lifestyles. Physical activity, therapeutic exercise, body, and movement awareness training and supervised and group exercise programmes of moderate aerobic intensity are effective to alleviate symptoms of depression in adolescents. In adolescents exercise programs have a treatment time of 6 weeks, with 4 sessions per week and with each session being 30 minutes long. In this regard, adherence and compliance to exercise is a key factor which in many cases is lacking. Therefore, it is important that young people have a lifestyle where they incorporate exercise into their daily lives. Physiotherapists can lead and perform programmes to accompany these patients in discovering the physical and functional activity that best suits them. These programmes follow a biopsychosocial approach which includes a motivational and behavioural analysis to accompany adolescents in discovering their favourite physical activity in order to enhance compliance of the personalised treatment

How will it contribute towards a comprehensive approach to mental health?

IMPLEMENTATION

Europe region World Physiotherapy promotes the role of the physiotherapists in mental health in primary, secondary, rehabilitative and community care through a holistic approach that incorporates education, occupation, and the societal element of care. Physiotherapists prescribe therapeutic exercise for mental health disorders such as depression in adolescents and have the knowledge to develop educational and training strategies for use at clinical, community, national and European levels. These strategies include skills that address not only the intervention methodology but also a motivational analysis as well as behavioural and biopsychosocial aspects. Our organisation has a membership of 37 national physiotherapy associations which represent a total of 200,000 physiotherapists in Europe. The Mental Health Working Group of the Europe region World Physiotherapy can lead a team composed by experts in the field from various EU countries to come up with a common and holistic strategy to tackle depression in adolescents. This will include guidelines and recommendations for programmes that can be implemented at national level in primary care, socio-health, educational and community social centres in all European countries. National physiotherapy associations will advocate for the adoption of such programmes in their countries.

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



BOOST PROJECT (www.boostproject.eu)

BACKGROUND

Promoting mental health from early childhood is a critical action to build and boost mental wellbeing and resilience in children and young people, leading to potential positive long-lasting effects on European society. Education plays a key role in achieving this goal. The development of social and emotional skills is an important part of mental health promotion and many school-based Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs providing these skills have proven effective in increasing social wellbeing and academic achievement in children, as well as increased success in the labour market and life in general. Based on this evidence, the Horizon2020 project BOOST (www.boostproject.eu) designed an organisational and pedagogical approach to integrate social and emotional components in teachers' pedagogical skills and classroom interaction, and developed tools for school staff to facilitate its implementation and uptake in classrooms, schools and among school owners. Through this cascade effect, the overall aim of the approach is to increase resilience and mental well-being among children across the EU. The development of the BOOST approach involved primary school children, school owners, teachers, policymakers, and a multidisciplinary team of researchers from the fields of education, psychology, public health, and economics.

CONCRETE ACTION

Idea:

Adoption of the #BOOSTApproach in primary schools. The #BOOSTApproach is a holistic whole-school and population-based approach that, targeting teachers' pedagogical skills and the whole school staff, aims to build and boost mental well-being and resilience in primary school children through the integration of effective components of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs into the school programs.

EU added value and potential benefits:

The #BOOSTApproach was developed by the Horizon2020 project BOOST, covering the period 2018-2023, and implemented in mainstream primary school environments in three different European countries: Poland, Spain, and Norway. Scientific literature has demonstrated that students exposed to SEL activities feel safer and more connected to schools and academics, build good work habits, social skills and stronger relationships with peers and teachers (Zins et al., 2004), and thus strongly contribute to the promotion of mental well-being in the young. BOOST research clearly shows the importance of taking on a whole-school approach, involving all school staff (not just pedagogical staff), when working with personal, social and learning-to-learn skills. With this perspective in mind, the project developed an

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evidence-based approach to empower schools to work more systematically and effectively with SEL skills. BOOST work and vision is in line with the Council Recommendation on key competencies for lifelong learning adopted in May 2018, and the Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success adopted in November 2022. BOOST was mentioned in the European Commission's Healthier Together – EU NCDs Initiative among the key initiatives and actions to promote mental wellbeing of the population in the EU. In February 2023, the BOOST consortium responded to the call for evidence on "A comprehensive approach to mental health" launched by the European Commission.

CHALLENGES

The adoption of the #BOOSTApproach may contribute to addressing mental health promotion and prevention across the EU from early childhood by intervening in the school environments, which represent a critical place for the development of children's personality and socio-emotional competencies. Among the main findings from the BOOST project, there is the fact that in several countries, personal, social and learning-to-learn competencies are not sufficiently included in the education curricula of children, which necessarily prioritises scholastic skills, such as reading, writing and mathematics, which are already included in general teaching programs and give concrete, measurable results. The project also showed how, in school systems already working with SEL programmes, each school and each of its staff members used to deal with SEL individually instead of adopting a whole-school approach. To work systematically and collectively with SEL, it is crucial to change the current organisational model of schools, which is the main finding of the BOOST project.

IMPLEMENTATION

Despite the BOOST project's planned end in June 2023, the BOOST partners will continue to exploit the project's results and advocate for the adoption of the #BOOSTApproach in many schools across Europe. To make it practical, the approach was built on the understanding that flexibility is essential: this may increase chances for schools to successfully absorb and implement it regardless of the different social, economic and cultural contexts, also taking into account schools' differences in internal organisation, priorities, and needs. Depending on the characteristics of school systems, the BOOST project provides schools' staff with examples and tools to guide them towards the most suitable and comprehensive approach to integrating SEL. Moreover, as stressed by the project results, a key component in encouraging schools in working systematically with SEL is political alignment and commitment across all the relevant levels of government, from local to European.

The approach and its tools, as well as the main results from the project's research, are available and accessible on the project website <https://www.boostproject.eu>.

The BOOST approach and project outcomes are already being shared with relevant stakeholders, including schools and policy makers, through both national events and a Conference in Brussels scheduled for 23 May.

How will it contribute towards a comprehensive approach to mental health?

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



EUROCAM (cam-europe.eu)

BACKGROUND

It is becoming increasingly clear that social causes have a high impact on mental health illness rates and that the high rates exceed the capacity of the mental health care system (long waiting lists, shortage of healthcare providers). We have to realise that treating disease only will not improve the health of populations. There is a need to add wellbeing and quality of life to individuals' than focussing only on organs/brains. The current system is centred on an individual medicalised approach, leading to fragmented care, health inequalities (limited access and poor outcomes). The power imbalance between users and healthcare providers, over-reliance on medicines and symptom reduction, poor effectiveness of antidepressants, with less than a third of patients deriving the desired outcomes, commonly accompanied by substantial side effects are all factors that indicate that the current health care system doesn't create mental health. In addition, mental health problems are one of the leading causes of the overall somatic disease burden worldwide. These are risk factors that affect the incidence and prognosis of non-communicable diseases

CONCRETE ACTION

• **Idea:**

A change in the focus and practices of mental health care, including fundamental reforms in education, clinician training, and research. Creating an ecosystem of collaborative public mental health care, person-centred care focused on prevention, resilience, health promotion, and health literacy.

• **EU added value and potential benefits:**

People's resilience, selfcare and health literacy will be enhanced if we move from a disease care system to a real health care system, from a static definition of health (a state of complete physical, psychological and social well-being and not only the absence of disease to a dynamic definition of health) to a dynamic one (the ability to adapt and direct control of yourself with regard to the physical, emotional and social challenges of life). Then health is no longer strictly the domain of healthcare professionals but a concern of everyone. After all, health is more than medical care. 89% of health occurs outside of the clinical space through our genetics (22%), individual behaviour (36%), social circumstances (24%), and environment (7%). In the long run, healthcare costs and disease absenteeism will reduce.

How will this help to strengthen action on mental health at EU level and enhance the mental health of European citizens?

CHALLENGES

The proposed action will help promote mental health, quality of life, and the prevention of mental health problems. Addressing mental health is crucial for overall well-being, as it is closely connected with physical health. Addressing mental illnesses in primary care settings will delay progression, improve survival outcomes, and reduce the health care costs of non-communicable diseases.

How will it contribute towards a comprehensive approach to mental health?

IMPLEMENTATION

Traditional, Complementary, and Integrative Medicine (TCIM) can be essential in enhancing mental health. Lifestyle interventions like healthy nutrition, exercise, relaxation, sound sleep, mind-body practices such as mindfulness or yoga training, and natural What can your organisation do to put this idea in place? methods such as Acupuncture, Ayurveda, anthroposophic medicine, herbal medicine, homeopathic medicine, naturopathic or traditional European medicine, reiki therapy, and traditional Chinese medicine should be accessible to all people. There is growing scientific evidence demonstrating the positive effects of TCIM on mental health by improving the daily management of mental illness and building up mental and physical resilience. EUROCAM is a European platform for organisations representing patients, medical doctors, practitioners, and veterinarians in the sector of Traditional, Complementary, and Integrative Medicine (TCIM). EUROCAM emphasises the need for a paradigm shift from treating and managing medical conditions to health promotion which requires a patient-centred approach focusing on health education, health literacy, lifestyle coaching, and treatments that enhance health. EUROCAM can deliver the knowledge, expertise, and scientific evidence to help reach these goals. More information about EUROCAM and TCIM can be found on our website <https://cam-europe.eu>

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



Early Detection



NEUROCOGNITION AND EMOTION IN AFFECTIVE DISORDERS CENTRE (NEAD) (<https://nead.dk/>)

BACKGROUND

Postpartum depression (PPD) is a major mental health concern that affects many new parents, with approximately 12% of new mothers and 8% of new fathers experiencing it. Parents with a history of depression are at higher risk, with up to 30% experiencing PPD. Multiple risk factors contribute to PPD, including a history of depression, pregnancy complications, weak attachment feelings to the unborn child, and emotion regulation difficulties. Negative cognitive biases, such as perceiving infant cues negatively and reacting strongly to infant distress, also play a critical role in PPD development. Negative ratings of infant cry during pregnancy increase the risk of PPD by an odds ratio of 3.75. Preventive interventions targeting specific risk factors, such as emotion regulation training, may be key to reducing PPD incidence. While pharmacologic interventions are commonly used for high-risk pregnant women, many are hesitant to use them due to potential side effects on foetal health. Psychological interventions such as talk therapy, psychoeducation, and midwife consultations are effective in treating PPD. However, they typically focus on detecting and treating rather than preventing PPD. Better screening tools are needed to identify expectant parents at risk of PPD, along with preventive interventions targeting the mechanisms mediating PPD development.

CONCRETE ACTION

- **Idea:**

To address this issue, we propose an internet-based screening and prevention tool for expectant parents that can identify individuals at high risk of developing PPD and provide them with psychological exercises, including emotion regulation, cognitive bias modification and visualization techniques, to prevent its onset.

- **EU added value and potential benefits:**

The proposed internet-based screening and prevention tool for PPD has significant potential to strengthen mental health action at the EU level and enhance the mental health of European citizens in multiple ways. Firstly, by providing early preventive interventions, the tool can reduce the incidence and severity of PPD symptoms, improving the mental health and well-being of new parents and their families. Secondly, the tool can address gaps in existing preventive strategies for PPD by identifying individuals at high risk of PPD and providing targeted interventions to prevent the condition. Thirdly, the tool can promote a preventive, holistic approach to mental health care by integrating psychological exercises to build resilience and coping mechanisms to

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address multiple PPD risk factors. Lastly, PPD can have a significant economic impact on individuals, families, and society as a whole. By providing early preventive interventions, the tool can reduce the economic burden associated with the condition, including healthcare costs and reduced work productivity. Promoting mental health and well-being can have positive spill over effects on the economy, such as increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, and lower healthcare costs.

CHALLENGES

The proposed internet-based screening and prevention tool for PPD can contribute significantly to reducing the stigma associated with mental health problems by promoting awareness and education on PPD and its risk factors. The tool can also reduce the stigma associated with seeking mental health care, as it is easily accessible and cost-effective due to its internet-based nature. Further, the tool detects PPD risk factors very early, and provide easy access to innovative approaches to prevention of PPD, improving the quality of life of new parents and their families. The tool's integration of psychological exercises, including emotion regulation and visualization techniques, promotes a holistic approach to mental health care. By addressing gaps in existing preventive strategies for PPD, the tool advocates for a preventive approach to mental health care, aiming to reduce the long-term impact of mental health problems on individuals and society.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Mental Health Services in the Capital Region of Denmark can be involved in implementing the proposed internet-based screening and prevention tool for PPD by collaborating with developers, promoting the tool to stakeholders, providing training and support for healthcare professionals, and evaluating its effectiveness. Collaboration with EU-level mental health organizations and policymakers to promote the tool's benefits and secure funding for its implementation is crucial. Piloting the tool in selected EU member states can evaluate its effectiveness and refine the tool to ensure its relevance and acceptability across different cultural contexts. Adapting the tool to meet the specific needs and regulations of each EU member state is necessary. Promoting the tool's use and benefits to the general public through social media, advertising, and public events can raise awareness of PPD and reduce stigma associated with mental health problems. Mental health organizations can use social media platforms to target new parents and other stakeholders, creating an engaged community that supports the implementation and adoption of the tool. With a multifaceted and collaborative approach, involving healthcare providers, policymakers, and mental health organizations, the internet-based screening and prevention tool for PPD can be successfully implemented across the EU.

How will it contribute towards a comprehensive approach to mental health?

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



UIZ.CARE (<https://www.uiz.care/>)

BACKGROUND

UIZ.CARE is a digital health start-up that uses AI technology, physical health data, mental fitness data, and wearables data to provide personalized medical care and advice to young patients (GEN Z). We strongly believe in bringing mental fitness data into the General Practitioner's office for an integral diagnosis both before and during the doctor's visit, and we're working to change the way young people receive comprehensive healthcare. This comprehensive approach will have a significant impact on 104 million EU citizens' mental health management. Mental health problems are common and frequently co-occur with physical health problems, resulting in poorer health outcomes and higher healthcare costs. By combining mental fitness data into its platform, UIZ.CARE is tackling this problem and giving patients more thorough care. This could lessen the burden on healthcare systems while simultaneously improving patient outcomes. Early detection and treatment of mental health issues can undoubtedly benefit from the integration of mental fitness data into general practitioners' diagnostic procedures. UIZ.CARE may need to concentrate on aspects like solid collaborations with healthcare providers, good marketing plans, ongoing research and development, user feedback and participation, and securing required money and resources in order to make this program effective and successful. Additionally, it will be crucial to guarantee that the platform complies with legal requirements and upholds the confidentiality and security of patient data. UIZ.CARE intends to give Physicians a more comprehensive view of their patients' health by integrating mental fitness data into their platform, enabling a more precise and individualized diagnosis and treatment plan. This thorough method of care management at the GP point can improve patient outcomes and make better use of healthcare resource

CONCRETE ACTION

• Idea:

Incorporating mental fitness data into its platform alongside wearables and physical symptoms data for GP diagnosis, UIZ.CARE aims to contribute to a more comprehensive approach to care management at the GP point.

• EU added value and potential benefits:

With 35 million young people in the EU suffering from mental health conditions, the challenge of addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach from both the public and private healthcare sectors. Gen Z is particularly affected, with increased social media use and unique challenges like economic instability and social unrest contributing to anxiety and depression. UIZ.CARE is at the forefront of addressing this issue by offering a holistic approach that incorporates mental fitness data alongside wearables and physical symptoms, providing convenient and accessible resources for patients and contributing to a healthier future for the EU.

How will this help to strengthen action on mental health at EU level and enhance the mental health of European citizens?

CHALLENGES

UIZ.CARE's action will help to address several challenges related to mental health, including Early detection of mental health problems, access to innovative approaches to treatment and care. UIZ.CARE contributes to the early detection of mental health problems and access to innovative approaches to treatment and care by providing an AI-supported health platform that helps improve the efficiency and accuracy of medical diagnoses. The platform uses image analysis, predictive modeling, and natural language processing to assist with managing large amounts of patient data, reducing administrative workloads, and improving overall quality of care. This innovative approach helps to detect mental health problems early and provide patients with personalized medical advice based on data driven insights and the latest technological advancements. By making healthcare more accessible, affordable, and convenient for GenZ in the Eindhoven region first. UIZ.CARE is helping to improve access to innovative approaches to treatment and care for mental health problems

IMPLEMENTATION

- Sufficient funding: The initiative needs adequate funding to develop and implement the AI-supported health platform. This includes investment in customer validation, product development, and market validation.
- Strong partnerships: Strong partnerships with healthcare providers and professionals are crucial to ensure that the platform meets the needs of both patients and healthcare providers. It is also essential to establish partnerships with academic institutions and research centres to stay up-to date on the latest research and advancements in mental healthcare.
- Skilled team: A skilled and diverse team with expertise in mental healthcare, AI technology, and business development is necessary to drive the initiative forward.
- Regulatory compliance: Compliance with regulatory standards and data privacy regulations is critical to ensure patient data is secure and protected.
- Community involvement: Involving the local community in the development and implementation of the initiative is vital to ensure that the platform is culturally sensitive and meets the specific needs of the population it serves. By addressing these factors, UIZ.CARE can become a powerful running initiative that has a significant impact on mental healthcare in the EU. Find us on the Invest EU portal - INPO-20232805 and join us if you can via www.uiz.care

How will it contribute towards a comprehensive approach to mental health?

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



Psychosocial risks at work



HEALTH TECH WITHOUT BORDERS (htwb.org)

BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of creating mental health programs for the healthcare workforce. The increased levels of psychological and moral distress experienced by the healthcare workforce continue to be a public health problem. This problem requires a thoughtful and comprehensive approach aimed at supporting those who provide daily medical care for the population. Health Tech Without Borders' "Helping Healers Heal" program is an example of such a support program. "Helping Healers Heal" or 3H program is a virtual mental health support program that implements a multi-faceted modality such as peer support, essential skill coaching, assistance in resilience building, and stress monitoring. In Ukraine, the 3H was established to create a safe virtual environment to support mental health, strengthen resilience and increase the sustainability of Ukrainian clinicians (psychologists and psychotherapists) conducting psychological services in times of ongoing war and acute trauma. 3H is now also involved in support efforts in Turkey, where it aims to reduce the psychological stress and moral distress stemming from the humanitarian crisis in Turkey. The 3H platform also offers its participants to discuss clinical challenges, discuss educational needs and share best practices.

CONCRETE ACTION

The program intends to support the mental health/ healthcare workforce using various supportive therapeutic modalities.

It provides an opportunity to conduct individual/ group sessions to identify, mitigate, monitor psychological and moral distress. The program directed to support participants in resilience-building skills while aiding the utilization of recovery and coping skills.

▪ EU added value and potential benefits:

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the interconnectedness of community and public health. The psychological and moral distress experienced by healthcare professionals at work could transfer negative environment and maladaptive behaviors outside work and affect their families and the community. Early recognition of psychological and moral distress, moral injury, burnout have a significant positive effect on the overall mental health, psychological well-being of the EU population.

How will this help to strengthen action on mental health at EU level and enhance the mental health of European citizens?

Implementing mental health support for the healthcare workforce will improve sustainability, resilience, and workforce retention within EU member states. The program will enhance the well-being of the healthcare workforce, allowing them to continue supporting their patients while maintaining a healthy work-life balance. The program should include a leadership education component to provide healthcare leaders with resources to adequately address and mitigate their workers' psychological and moral distress, which are common in current EU healthcare settings. By improving communication between healthcare leaders and the workforce, the proposed program will have a positive systemic effect on EU healthcare organizations and agencies. As this program supports workforce retention and sustainability, it will also decrease the financial burden of maintaining the necessary level of the EU healthcare workforce. This, in return, will improve access to healthcare for the EU population.

CHALLENGES

EU healthcare workforce continues to experience long hours shortage of workforce, including scarce resources such as the number of beds, ratio patients to nurses, number of patients assigned to providers, etc. In this current setting, the importance of mental health support is hard to overestimate. Prevention of burnout, increasing workforce sustainability, prevention of secondary trauma and long-term psychological problems, and establishing healthier work-life balance are the purposes of HTWB's proposal of a mental health support program, like "Helping Healers Heal." Implementing such programs for the EU healthcare workforce will be based on new digital communication approaches, like Tele-psychiatry. The implementation will also allow the early detection of future psychological traumas in the healthcare workforce. It will create conditions for open conversations about mental health issues in healthcare, leading to the further destigmatization of mental health illness.

IMPLEMENTATION

Health Tech without Borders is a global non-profit organization that supports local communities affected by humanitarian emergencies.

The proposed program is a mental health support program that is virtual or in-person in nature. It is implemented in a multi-faceted modality, such as peer support, essential skill coaching, assistance in resilience building, and stress monitoring. As a part of the program, each institution and agency have access to "mentors" who are mental health providers or specially trained healthcare providers. This group of "mentors" are trained to provide mental health support (debriefings, group, or individual support) to the healthcare workforce.

General aspects:

- Person-centred approach
- Therapeutic relationships and clinical alliances are built on mutual trust, respect, and empathy.
- Mutual engagement in dialogue based on respect and attentive listening.
- Safe virtual environment with individual approach to schedule and format of participation

How will it contribute towards a comprehensive approach to mental health?

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

- Language according to the mentees' preference
- Contextual alignment
- Trauma-informed care/ trauma therapy
- Valuable resources of information and knowledge

Based on its experience implementing the "Helping Healers Heal" program for different countries Health Tech Without Borders will be able to conduct the necessary training EU member states champions to implement the proposed program in respective countries.



EDENRED (www.edenred.com/en)

CONCRETE ACTION

- Idea:

Edenred, through social vouchers' implementation, promotes a well-balanced lifestyle between workplace and private sphere for employees. Edenred strives to facilitate dialogue and enrich connections between employers, suppliers, and employees. Our tools have an impact on multiple arrays of mental health while, for instance, securing the food budget of households, boosting access to personal and household services from home cleaning to childcare, or limiting children school drop-out.

- EU added value and potential benefits:

In a society where citizens are increasingly prone to mental disorders, it becomes necessary to establish a clear, cross-sectoral strategy that integrates all stakeholders. Our knowledge of the professional environment is an invaluable resource to contribute to support workers' mental health. In the course of our activities, we deal day-to-day with a wide variety of partners (SMEs, multinationals, public administrations, NGOs, private companies). During the last PHEG sub-group on mental health meeting, the necessity to support the professional environment through a holistic approach has been highlighted. Today, depression is the 2nd leading cause of disability and illness in the world. It is largely caused by stress, created partly at the workplace. To counterbalance this weight on the shoulders of the workers, it is necessary to carry out a double work of prevention and support at the workplace. For instance, we support a mandatory lunch break. Lunch break is a right to disconnect from work while better connecting with colleagues. It is essential for the mental regeneration of workers. The meal voucher allows an employee to have access to a daily moment of disconnection with his colleagues around a meal that he can choose as he pleases. We are carrying this message through the FOOD program (launched in 2009 and financed by the European Commission) which aims to fight obesity in Europe by promoting a healthier diet.

How will this help to strengthen action on mental health at EU level and enhance the mental health of European citizens?

CHALLENGES

By the nature of our initiatives, we touch on several phases of action in the fight against mental problems. Our actions in the field of healthcare are quite broad and cover prevention, quality of life as well as follow-up and support for affected individuals. For instance, French companies wishing to offer work-life balance support to their employees can allocate them some CESU tickets. It is a way to support equal, fair and affordable access to personal and household services which is a structural determinant for mental health. Moreover, the employer can also provide access to sports facilities and cultural events to improve the quality of life and motivation of its employees. The practice of a physical activity is first and foremost a public health issue and contributes to the mental balance of citizens. The COVID crisis has demonstrated the devastating effects of a forced sedentary lifestyle and is now being confirmed by a rise in obesity in Europe, particularly among the young.

IMPLEMENTATION

Edenred's work contributes to stand alongside individuals daily with a constant support. In time of crisis, mental health is put to the test and regularly deteriorates. Alongside to public authorities, Edenred works to develop solutions to secure citizens' budgets and improve their well-being. The meal voucher is a tool that contributes to securing food budget of employees and therefore their financial well-being. By directing part of the expenses towards food, it contributes to avoid extra anxiety due to financial concerns. Considering mental health in a comprehensive approach is also avoiding citizens to make consumption choices that would result in going without food to pay the rent or energy bills for instance. The nature of vouchers allows the agile implementation of dedicated programs, adaptable to various local contexts and to the needs of society. This is essential to fight against the deterioration of mental health, which is protean. One of the major areas of work remains the consideration of mental health in a digital world. Edenred assisted companies in their modernization process during the COVID crisis for instance. A teleworking solution has been developed notably in France to enable employees to get access to IT equipment making possible for them to work remotely. This is one example of how we can be mobilized in the short term. There remains room for improvement in prevention and communication to employees and employers. As what we are doing with the prevention of a more balanced diet through the FOOD Programme, we could work on a list of recommendations to promote mental health in the workplace. Our experience in organizing exchanges within the public area is also one way to improve our contribution in this regard.

How will it contribute towards a comprehensive approach to mental health?

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



TAMPERE UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES (TAMK) (www.tuni.fi/en)

BACKGROUND

Burnout is becoming a global pandemic jeopardizing brain health, with a huge impact on quality of life, available workforce, and the economy. Knowledge of the impact of burnout on cognition, physiology, and physical activity (PA) in daily life allows for an improved understanding of the health consequences and everyday ramifications of burnout.

CONCRETE ACTION

▪ Idea:

Twenty-eight volunteer teachers participated in a three-day recording of daily physiology and PA, including heart rate (HR), heart rate variability (HRV), and daily steps, with a wearable device. They filled in questionnaires screening for burnout (BBI-15), depression (BDI), and executive functions (EFs) in daily life (BRIEF-A).

▪ EU added value and potential benefits:

The subjects with burnout had more challenges in EFs, higher average HRs, and lower numbers of steps in daily life than those without it. The BBI-15 scores correlated positively with the BDI scores and BRIEF-A indices and negatively with the awake HR variability (HRV) and daily steps. The metacognition index correlated negatively with the HRV. The physiological analysis showed significant differences between the non-burnout and burnout groups regarding average HR and the number of steps. The burnout group had a higher HR and a lower number of daily steps. There was a tendency toward lower HRV-Awake values in the burnout group. There were no statistical differences between the groups in the lowest daily HR (MinHR), the highest daily HR (MaxHR), or the total amount of sleep.

How will this help to strengthen action on mental health at EU level and enhance the mental health of European citizens?

CHALLENGES

Burnout is linked with compromised EFs, cardiac physiology alterations, and PA in daily life. The subjects with burnout experienced more subjective challenges in executive functioning in everyday life compared with those without it. The challenges were, however, subtle, and did not reflect clinical executive dysfunction. Such alterations may be easily detected with wearable devices, opening possibilities for novel biomarkers of burnout and other neuropsychiatric disorders. We suggest that physical activity and heart and brain health are intimately intertwined, and that burnout interacts with each of them bi-directionally.

IMPLEMENTATION

Considering the positive effects of PA on burnout symptoms and PA and sleep on EFs, as well as the very limited treatment options for burnout and executive dysfunction on the other hand, assessing the level of PA and the amount of sleep in daily life with wearable devices could be beneficial when evaluating risk for burnout and when planning treatment or rehabilitation. The number of steps is a very easy and accessible tool for the basic evaluation of PA in everyday life, and it is possible to set very concrete and individual goals during rehabilitation if needed. More research is needed to find out the optimal level of PA to improve burnout symptoms and EFs. Of course, one needs to also consider the possibility that a low number of steps is a consequence of burnout and the associated challenges in EFs. It is also of great value to assess perceived challenges in daily tasks relying on different EFs with a standardized questionnaire broadly used to assess EFs in neuropsychiatric and other brain disorders. To our knowledge, this was the first study to assess perceived EFs in daily life along with objective measures of PA and cardiac physiology reflecting the activity balance of the autonomic nervous system.

How will it contribute towards a comprehensive approach to mental health?

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

This research is made by Sustainable brain health project. The aim of the Sustainable Brain Health project is to improve employee well-being and brain health.





Access to treatment and care



SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES (sos-childrensvillages.org)

BACKGROUND

Trauma experiences during childhood can have a serious impact on psychosocial and brain development. As a result of trauma, children might face problems building relationships, trusting adults, regulating their emotions and behaviours as well as learning at school. Children and young people in alternative care have often experienced high levels of stress, traumatic events, including the separation from their family. They are highly vulnerable to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) (such as sexual, physical or emotional violence, neglect, abandonment, parental mental disorders, the loss of a parent, poverty, discrimination). As a result, the prevalence of mental health disorders is higher among young people with care experience compared to their peers. 30 per cent of adult care leavers experience mental health disorders – this is almost double the estimates for the general population¹. Despite these common experiences, many care practitioners are unequipped or not adequately trained in how to care for children and young people who have experienced trauma. However, if they are well supported those children and young people have the capacity to face and overcome those adverse experiences and ultimately can still thrive and develop to their fullest potential.

CONCRETE ACTION

▪ Idea:

We recommend to integrate trauma-informed practices into alternative care. The objective is to give care practitioners and organisations the tools and knowledge required to understand how ACEs can impact on a child's development and then be able to best help children and young people to overcome the effects of trauma.

▪ EU added value and potential benefits:

The EU can promote trauma-informed care by supporting Member States to embed trauma-informed practices into their policies and practices addressing children and young people in alternative care. The EU can facilitate the exchange of good practices between social practitioners of EU Member States and raise awareness on the benefits of trauma-informed practices. In alternative care settings, trauma-

How will this help to strengthen action on mental health at EU level and enhance the mental health of European citizens?

informed practices help children and young people that experienced trauma to heal, regain confidence and ensure their voices are heard, particularly as the meaningful participation of children and youth is one of the key elements required to embed a trauma-informed approach into organisations and the daily work of professionals. Other benefits include the increased possibility for children and young people to feel safe, trust adults, experience nurturing relationships, learn how to manage feelings and cope with difficult situations. Using trauma-informed practices in other existing structures and services (e.g. health clinics, early childhood, schools) will allow a larger number of children affected by trauma to be reached. This is fully in line with and will greatly contribute to the objectives of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the EU Child Guarantee to make sure children can develop to their full potential.

CHALLENGES

Ensuring trauma-informed practices are integrated into the provision of alternative care will address several challenges and should be a key pillar of the Communication. Trauma-informed practices are not mainstreamed in child protection systems nor in alternative care settings and using them would constitute an innovative approach to promote and protect the mental health of children and youth. They will contribute to their recovery from adverse experiences and may prevent that the care placement inadvertently triggers trauma memories, or even further traumatizes the child or young person, worsening the impact on their mental health. Having organisations reflect on and change key policies, strategies and processes, and providing practitioners with adequate training on trauma and the effects on children and young people will enable them to recognise and understand the impact trauma can have on a child development. Detecting will be key to best support and empower children on their recovery journey.

IMPLEMENTATION

SOS Children's Villages is a federation supporting children and young people without parental care or at risk of losing it in more than 130 countries, 22 of which are EU Member States. As part of the EU co-funded project 'Safe Places, Thriving Children: Embedding Trauma-Informed Practices into Alternative Care Settings' (2020-2022), SOS Children's Villages has developed an e-learning course, training manual and delivered face-to-face trainings and organisational development workshops. We could support in reaching out to alternative care practitioners in various EU Member States using those already existing quality resources. This would enable a larger number of practitioners and organisations to recognise trauma and use trauma-informed practices in their daily work with children and youth. Those trainings and materials could also be replicated and benefit child protection organisations as well as other sectors such as the social, educational, health and justice sectors that work with and for children and youth.

How will it contribute towards a comprehensive approach to mental health?

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



CULTURE ACTION EUROPE (<https://cultureactioneurope.org/>)

CONCRETE ACTION

• Idea:

Social prescribing is 'a means for health-care workers to connect patients to a range of nonclinical services in the community to improve health and well-being' (WHO 2022). CentreForum Mental Health Commission (2014, p. 6) defines social prescribing as 'a mechanism for linking patients with non-medical sources of support within the community'. Social prescribing is considered a holistic approach to health care, promoting a community-based integrated care, and helping to demedicalize the delivery of health services (WHO, 2022). The social prescriptions models are unique to each community and care environment, but often they include programs promoting physical exercise and artistic expression as well as services offering assistance for mental health, social inclusion, and financial and housing counselling. Social prescribing has been implemented in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Singapore, Japan, Portugal, Ireland, United Kingdom of Great Britain, and Northern Ireland (WHO, 2022). Arts on Prescription is supported through the social prescribing theme and was established in the mid-1990s and consisted in workshops and creative activities on dance, film, drama, poetry, music, painting, photography and sculpture, in order to support people suffering from anxiety and other mental health issues (Thompson et al., 2015).

• EU added value and potential benefits:

The EU could enable 1) awareness raising on social prescribing and culture-based social prescribing across the EU countries, 2) enable the development and adoption of existing training material from other countries and 3) offer targeted training to health, social and culture practitioners and decision makers and 4) enable peer to peer learning across Member States/regions depending on the financing structure of each MS's health systems and 5) finance piloting projects in MS. Through offering "train the trainer" workshops it could enable the spreading of the methodology across all MS - and reach economies of scale. Social prescribing, and culture based social prescribing may be cost effective as it may lower demand and pressures on the healthcare system (WHO, 2022). Social prescribing is a model that can be offered in a customised way to various audiences, targeting both young audiences and adult/elderly audiences. Intergenerational projects can also be explored through this methodology- creating opportunities to see the connection between life stages and not to directly address various target groups in an isolated manner.

How will this help to strengthen action on mental health at EU level and enhance the mental health of European citizens?

CHALLENGES

Culture-based social prescribing could be used as preventive measures for health and well-being targeting a person in her young ages as well as older audiences. According to the WHO (2022), the populations that are most likely to benefit from the social prescribing schemes are: people with chronic conditions, lonely people or socially isolated people, people at a high risk of mental health illness and other vulnerable people. Creative and artistic activities have the potential to address the stigmatised mental health issue and to contribute to the promotion of good mental health through soft means, other than those used in the traditional psychotherapeutic approach. Raising awareness and work on prevention of mental health problems could start from a very young age in a playful creative way by using arts, opening new possibilities for addressing the mental challenges in a resilient way in adult life.

IMPLEMENTATION

Based on its Europe-wide membership and the connections built through the CultureForHealth project with researchers, decision makers and practitioners, if enabled by funding, Culture Action Europe could allocate human resources and be involved in/lead the EU-wide awareness raising, the development of training material and organisation of train the trainer sessions on social prescribing. Regarding implementation, as each country of Europe distinguishes itself in the way the public health services, social services and cultural offer are provided to the inhabitants of the country, the suggestion would be a pilot test of arts on prescription programme for the EU countries, in which the organisations responsible for this process explore the model for very specific contexts. For instance, Cluj Cultural Centre explores at the local and national level the possibilities to create and transfer specific artistic interventions oriented towards health and well-being. Cluj Cultural Centre could mobilise the sectors involved in a potential programme of arts on prescriptions implemented in Romania, particularly the cultural sector, the health and social sector and could facilitate the co-creation and implementation of such a pilot programme.

How will it contribute towards a comprehensive approach to mental health?

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



EMTC (emtc-eu.com)

BACKGROUND

Music therapy is the professional use of music and its elements as an intervention in medical, educational, and everyday environments with individuals, groups, families, or communities who seek to optimize their quality of life and improve their physical, social, communicative, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual health and wellbeing (WFMT, 2011.) Research, practice, education, and clinical training in music therapy are based on professional standards according to cultural, social, and political contexts. Research by the WHO Regional Office for Europe has shown that the use of artistic media in healthcare and in communities can have a variety of benefits for health outcomes. They can be used to communicate valuable messages across cultures and political divides, help affected communities understand the risks of certain diseases or behaviors and provide ways for affected populations to process and learn from their individual and collection experience to improve their wellbeing among other benefits (WHO, 2019.)

CONCRETE ACTION

• Idea:

EMTC will take a leading role, along with national associations, to raise awareness to signals of mental health problems, offer support to integration qualified music therapy in mental health institutions and promote training and research in the field

• EU added value and potential benefits:

Music therapy has been shown to be effective in improving symptoms of depression, anxiety, and trauma. It can help individuals develop social and emotional skills, such as communication, self-expression, and emotional regulation. Music therapy can be a cost-effective intervention for mental health care, as it can reduce the need for medication and hospitalization. The more EU citizens are informed about music therapy as possible treatment, the better they can find adapted therapy.

How will this help to strengthen action on mental health at EU level and enhance the mental health of European citizens?

CHALLENGES

- Finding a way to provide easy, accessible, clear, and unambiguous information
- Lack of awareness and support in the classical mental health care. Therefore, more research outcomes are important.
- Reaching EU citizens who are isolated and/or don't have access to internet and information
- There is not yet EU recognition and regulation. EMTC does safeguard quality in music therapy.

IMPLEMENTATION

- The annual European Music Therapy Day will focus on the mental health effects in/by music therapy.
- Research projects will mental health scope will be spread by the EMTC website and scientific publications.
- A hybrid symposium focused on the application of music therapy in mental health can be organized by EMTC member associations in several EU and surrounding countries at the same time.
- EMTC member associations will promote the EU mental health strategy at several levels in their own country: political, health, community, education.

How will it contribute towards a comprehensive approach to mental health?

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



CLUJ CULTURAL CENTRE (<https://cccluj.ro/>)

CONCRETE ACTION

Cultural perceptions of parenthood and insufficient community care for mental health often contribute to a lack of awareness regarding postnatal depression across the EU. To address this, Cluj Cultural Centre collaborated with the Central Denmark Region under the supervision of the WHO Regional Office in Europe), inviting new mothers experiencing anxiety and overwhelming emotions to participate in a 10-week group singing intervention focused on their emotional and mental well-being, based on a clinically effective group singing intervention for new mums in the UK: Melodies for Mums). Throughout the 10 weeks, the mothers met for weekly one-hour singing sessions coordinated by trained singing leaders, where they connected with each other and shared their personal experiences with motherhood. Singing has been shown to release endorphins and oxytocin, hormones that promote bonding, stress relief, and happiness. The act of singing together fosters a sense of belonging and social support, which can be especially valuable for new mothers experiencing postnatal depression. Singing also provides an opportunity for emotional expression and can help to regulate mood. Our research results suggest that the singing group intervention significantly benefited the participating mothers, providing a supportive and nurturing environment for their mental health. This proactive approach aims to tackle post-natal depression early on, preventing it from becoming severe and promoting overall well-being for mothers and their families. By investing in the mental health of new mothers through singing-based interventions, the EU can indirectly strengthen the mental health of European citizens as a whole. A mother's well-being directly affects the health and development of her child. By addressing post-natal depression, we contribute to building a healthier and more resilient society.

CHALLENGES

Our action addresses several challenges related to mental health, specifically for new mothers experiencing postnatal depression:

- Promotion of mental health: Singing interventions foster emotional resilience and provide an opportunity for free and guided emotional expression
- Prevention of mental health problems: The proactive approach targets postnatal depression early, preventing it from becoming severe and reducing its long-term impact.

How will this help to strengthen action on mental health at EU level and enhance the mental health of European citizens?

- Early detection of mental health problems: Trained singing leaders and group members can identify signs of postnatal depression and refer mothers to appropriate resources.
- Access to innovative approaches to treatment and care: The singing intervention offers a non-pharmacological, culturally sensitive alternative to traditional treatments for postnatal depression, addressing concerns related to pharmacological interventions for breastfeeding mothers.
- Quality of life: By supporting new mothers' mental health, the intervention enhances their overall well-being, positively impacting their families and communities.
- Destigmatisation: The action promotes awareness and open conversation about postnatal depression, challenging cultural perceptions of parenthood and encouraging a more comprehensive approach to mental health care.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Expanding the network of trained singing leaders/Offering training/knowledge-sharing: By offering training opportunities to potential singing leaders across the EU, we can help establish a network of skilled professionals who can deliver the intervention in various regions, considering the feedback of the pilot's participants to ensure a supportive and nurturing environment.
- Fostering partnerships: we can collaborate with healthcare providers, maternity services, and other relevant stakeholders to integrate the singing intervention into existing care pathways, ensuring seamless support for new mothers experiencing postnatal depression
- Disseminating the model: By sharing the pilot's successes, quantitative research results, mothers' testimonies, and their experiences of feeling less lonely and overwhelmed, our organization can raise awareness of the intervention's benefits and encourage its adoption in more EU member states, contributing to a comprehensive approach to mental health care in maternity settings.
- Evaluating and refining the intervention: Our organization can oversee continuous evaluation and improvement of the intervention, considering feedback from participating mothers, singing leaders and implementation team to ensure its effectiveness and relevance for diverse communities and cultural contexts.
- Advocacy: As a civil society organization, we can play a crucial role in reducing stigma and providing support by advocating for policy changes that prioritize mental health care, especially in the context of postnatal depression. By sharing the positive experiences and feedback from mothers who have participated in the singing intervention, we can promote the program as a viable, non-pharmacological solution that addresses the needs and preferences of new mothers.

How will it contribute towards a comprehensive approach to mental health?

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



PAREA (parea.eu)

BACKGROUND

CONCRETE ACTION

- **Idea: Develop the infrastructure and expertise for a meaningful EU rollout of psychedelic novel treatments**

Psychedelic treatments are becoming a reality worldwide. Australia is introducing them into a medical system in 2023 and the US likely in 2024. We need to develop an infrastructure and expertise in advance to prepare for the highest quality safe, affordable, and equitable access to them in the EU.

- **EU added value and potential benefits:**

We need to address proactively numerous considerations related to the future EU roll-out of psychedelic treatments in terms of standards of care. This includes developing safety standards, ethical guidelines, codes of professional conduct, education, training, and examination for specialized therapists, their credentialing and licencing, safe and ethical use monitoring, engagement of communities and peer support networks, or developing data standards. The EU initiative on a comprehensive approach to mental health is perfectly placed to host such efforts. It can help to develop European guidelines that the EU Member States could choose to follow as they put in place frameworks and structures to accommodate the medical use of psychedelics. Such central coordination will have a clear EU added value and will create an effective and efficient mechanism to advance the field that has many things in common across the EU, as opposed to having EU countries preparing individually and duplicating efforts. This will require a streamlined, multistakeholder, and multidisciplinary effort involving scientists, regulators, payors, HCPs, and organisations representing patients, working together towards integrating psychedelic medicines into European healthcare system models, and building significant medical oversight over them.

How will this help to strengthen action on mental health at EU level and enhance the mental health of European citizens?

CHALLENGES

The action will address the challenge of access to innovative approaches to treatment and care. It will help to develop the expertise and infrastructure needed for a meaningful adoption of psychedelic novel treatments and, as such, will mitigate the risks of a premature introduction of these therapies into a clinical practice in ways that are poorly regulated and can endanger people's health. It will also address a lack of truly innovative mental health treatments that has been lingering for decades. While plenty of people wouldn't be here if it weren't for antidepressants, there are also millions who are on them and continue to struggle. Some don't respond to treatments, others experience unpleasant side effects. Moreover, antidepressants treat symptoms and require a long-term use. Psychedelic therapies help to confront the root causes of mental health problems and are often a one-off intervention.

IMPLEMENTATION

PAREA is a wide-ranging collaboration striving to help prepare Europe for safe and responsible roll-out of psychedelic medicines. Among our members, there are 4 patient organizations in the areas of: mental health (GAMIAN), chronic pain (Pain Alliance Europe), neurology (European Federation of Neurological Associations) and participants of clinical trials with psychedelics (PsyPAN); scientific societies: European Psychiatric Association and European College of Neuropsychopharmacology; umbrellas like European Brain Council and Association of European Cancer Leagues as well as all major European psychedelic foundations active in the area of research and education. We have developed close relationships with EU institutions such as the EP, EC and agencies like EMA and EMCDDA. We have issued various policy recommendations for the EU. As such, we have the necessary infrastructure and expertise to be involved in coordination actions helping Europe to prepare for the adoption of psychedelic treatments. Through cooperative and EU-led stakeholder engagement, a short window of opportunity opens for the creation of a framework that can facilitate safe, ethical, accessible, and equitable access to psychedelic treatments. We must act now – we owe it to millions of EU citizens affected by mental disorders who are often in desperate need of better treatments.

How will it contribute towards a comprehensive approach to mental health?

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



Quality of life



THE NORTHERN DIMENSION PARTNERSHIP ON CULTURE (<https://ndpculture.org/ndpc/>)

CONCRETE ACTION

Qub Education - Arts and creative activities in schools to increase mental health and well-being of young people

Qub Education creates a **long-term partnership between local schools and cultural and community players** in the city of Cluj-Napoca, Romania, to support young people develop life skills and facilitate their well-being. Within this framework, the school-related quality of life is increased through engagement in art activities, in different formats:

- Space for arts and well-being - a pilot space was developed in Onisifor Ghibu School in Cluj, Romania, enabling a permanent sensorial "safe space", where children can relax, release stress and enjoy. The space is particularly useful for accommodating the needs of neurodivergent children.
- Art'n'play - a programme of artists-in-residence in schools. Artists develop arts and creative activities in a school, for the entire duration of a school year. Singing, drawing, theatre activities a.o. help young people express their feelings, connect with each other, learn about mental health, deal with sensitive topics (e.g. bullying) and develop strategies to manage emotions.
- Qub - is a playful space for STEAM education. Activities in this space include arts and science clubs, talks with mental health experts, mediation classes, and a well-being programme.

Enabling long-term, sustainable partnerships between arts and education (especially at in local communities), can create a sustainable framework for young people to develop life skills such as emotional awareness and management, social connection, and empathic communication, contributing to a shift towards a healthier and saner society. Through integrated educational, cultural and health action, the EU can become the frontrunner of a society and economy of well-being.

How will this help to strengthen action on mental health at EU level and enhance the mental health of European citizens?

CHALLENGES

By supporting and creating strong arts-education partnerships, some challenges can be effectively addressed:

- Promotion of mental health and prevention of ill health - engagement with the arts, by mobilising sensorial, cognitive, emotional, and physical stimuli, naturally leads to development of psychological, physiological, behavioural benefits, which in turn contribute to health promotion and disease prevention (WHO, 2019).
- Young people can learn in school ways to cope with stress and different challenges, schools can become "happy" places (as opposed to sources of anxiety, as it is largely the case).
- Arts activities in youth communities help destigmatisation of mental health and of various social and economic conditions.
- Sensorial spaces involving arts are innovative strategies to manage in school communities the needs of young people with ADHD, autism etc.

IMPLEMENTATION

Cluj Cultural Centre can provide the methodology for developing and co-designing (with the young people) of sensorial spaces in any school or community centre. It can offer advice and training on any of the actions piloted - from how to develop and run artist in residence programmes in schools, to models of arts-related activities designed to improve youth mental health and well-being.

How will it contribute towards a comprehensive approach to mental health?

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



Cross-Cutting



HIV OUTCOMES (<https://hivoutcomes.eu/>)

BACKGROUND

Evidence shows that stigma and discrimination negatively impact mental health, which makes populations more prone to be stigmatised and suffer from mental health problems. People living with HIV have higher chance of developing mental health conditions in part because of the stigma and discrimination they face, which can further discourage seeking treatment and care. Common mental health conditions among people with HIV include depression, anxiety, and cognitive disorders. A study by Public Health England found that people with HIV are twice as likely to experience feelings of depression or anxiety than the general population. The burden of poor mental health is severe in HIV positive communities, where it has been published that 91.7% of those who state having poor mental health have suffered from suicidal ideation and/or self-harm. It is imperative that Member States take a comprehensive approach to address mental health, not only by raising awareness, but also by promoting education and advocating for inclusive policies that support implementation. This can only happen with adequate support to Member States in implementing and expanding access to mental health services, especially in vulnerable populations.

CONCRETE ACTION

▪ Idea:

European Commission should support Member States in expanding their access to mental health care services.

▪ EU added value and potential benefits:

Some Member States have expanded access to mental health support for young people in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as shown by a 2022 OECD survey, where 15 out of 22 surveyed European countries indicated that they had newly reinforced psychosocial and mental health support for students. Nevertheless, these actions should be encouraged outside the pandemic state. There is a need for a systems' approach to tackle mental health, especially in communities who experience stigma and discrimination, such as people living with HIV. To do so, we advocate for:

- Guidance and support for effective implementation of mental health services Effective implementation allows interdisciplinarity, joint responsibility, evidence-based practice, and opportunities to leverage existing efforts and resources. The EU should provide guidance regarding the implementation of mental health services, drawing on best practices from across the region.

- Reimbursement of mental health services Some Member States, such as Denmark, Romania, Austria, Poland, and France, have bolstered funding to strengthen mental health care services for young people during the pandemic. Nonetheless, this support should continue, particularly to help populations who live intersectional stigma and discrimination.

CHALLENGES

Support in expanding access to mental health care services in Member States would contribute not only to fight stigmatisation and invest in primary and secondary prevention, but also to effectively implement interdisciplinary mental health actions and policies, and investment in tertiary prevention of mental health-related diseases (such as outpatient support and continuing care).

- The appropriate guidance in implementation would contribute to a more homogeneous EU mental health prevention, treatment, and care, improving barriers in access across member states.
- The reimbursement of mental health services would allow communities with less socio-economic resources to overcome barriers in access to mental health services, which sometimes exist in their communities, but are not available due to economic constraints.

Member States could guarantee intersectional implementation and access to care for the millions of EU citizens living with mental health problems, including those living with HIV and EU could support Member States in this journey.

IMPLEMENTATION

HIV Outcomes is a coalition of patient organisations, medical professionals, academics, public institutions, and the private sector, aiming to address the needs that come with increased life expectancy of people with HIV and looks to improve health outcomes and the quality of life in the long-term. As a multistakeholder coalition present in various EU countries, HIV Outcomes can contribute to the debate around mental health in vulnerable groups, as well as provide evidence to support the European Commission in its informed and evidence-based policy making regarding mental health. HIV Outcomes seeks to improve the health-related quality of life of all people living with HIV, while implementing policy and clinical changes in countries within the WHO Europe Region by sharing evidence-based best practices and innovative approaches to care.

How will it contribute towards a comprehensive approach to mental health?

How will this help to strengthen action on mental health at EU level and enhance the mental health of European citizens?

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



A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH

#MentalHealth #HealthUnion



BACKGROUND (<https://www.eurordis.org/>)

Increased mental health risks are a reality for a range of vulnerable populations including youth, elderly, women, people with pre-existing health conditions¹ (such as chronic conditions and rare diseases) or disabilities, migrants, ethnic minorities, LGBTQIA+. Without mental health promotion, prevention and support, the psychological burden and mental health co-morbidities detrimentally impact on vulnerable populations' participation in society. The Comprehensive Approach on Mental Health needs to include all vulnerable populations and detail actions that are holistic, flexible and can be tailored to the specific needs of each population, across all policy areas.

Evidence demonstrates the link between physical health and mental wellbeing, with a correlation between the severity and complexity of a physical medical condition and the impact on mental health and wellbeing². This is true for chronic conditions and rare diseases, with an increased psycho-social vulnerability in these populations. Rare diseases are complex, chronic, and often debilitating disorders with multiple intersectional unmet needs. Frequently affecting children, rare diseases lead to social exclusion and discrimination, impacting access to education and employment. The accumulative impact of living with increased co-morbidities, psychological stressors, and social inequalities results in a higher prevalence of depression and anxiety disorders.

EURORDIS CONCRETE ACTION

Idea: To strengthen the capacities and empowerment of vulnerable groups to become mentally healthy communities, by developing a Mental Health & Wellbeing Toolkit for Vulnerable Populations. This toolkit can be generic, identifying best practices and evidence-based tools that can be tailored by each vulnerable population to address their specific needs.

EU added value and potential benefits: Addressing the needs of vulnerable populations present an area of added value for the European Union where EU community actions help to strengthen national measures. It is reported that each vulnerable population comprise a significant sized community – young people (67 million), older people (94 million), chronic diseases (50 million) and rare diseases (30 million).

There is a large discrepancy in health and social services available across EU countries to support these vulnerable populations. The development of a Mental Health & Wellbeing Toolkit for Vulnerable Populations would help address these gaps by strengthening the capacity of patient organisations and Civil Society Organisations (CSO) with EU-shared best practices and tools to support their respective communities, reducing avoidable downstream health, social and economic costs.

How will this help to strengthen action on mental health at EU level and enhance the mental health of European citizens?

A Mental Health & Wellbeing Toolkit for Vulnerable Populations could be used by patient groups, healthcare professionals and social service providers to build knowledge and understanding of the needs of each vulnerable population and the associated impact on mental health, allowing to better target simple effective psycho-social interventions for different populations.

Increasing resilience and capacities among the civil society organisations and patient groups, can support and empower them to better alleviate the risk factors and drivers of poor mental health, preventing mental health co-morbidities and addressing the high levels of unmet needs of these vulnerable populations.

Specifically:

- Reducing the impact on the lives of the affected individuals and their family members, increasing social inclusion and supporting access to education, employment and independent living.

Strengthening the resilience and wellbeing of vulnerable populations would have a direct benefit on the economies of EU Member States by reducing downstream costs and by increasing productivity, as affected families would be better able to work and have greater independence.

A joint initiative could bring together experts and leaders from vulnerable populations to share best practices and evidence-based approaches, test their applicability and scalability and co-create a common Mental Health & Wellbeing Toolkit for Vulnerable Populations.

CHALLENGES

A Mental Health & Wellbeing Toolkit for Vulnerable Populations can support actions in all policy areas specifically:

- Promotion of good mental health and prevention of mental health problems.
- Increased mental health literacy, awareness-raising & citizen empowerment.
- Early detection and screening of mental health problems.
- Strengthening the capacities of the health workforce.
- Supporting vulnerable populations and their families to self-care and to access evidence-based psycho-social interventions.
- Improving quality of life, specifically by facilitating participation in school and work by advancing on key elements such as de-stigmatisation and rights.

IMPLEMENTATION

EURORDIS could co-lead with other CSOs such as MHE and GAMIAN-Europe, EPF, EDF, UNICEF, Social Platform and its members, the co-creation of a Toolkit for Vulnerable Populations.

EURORDIS is launching a "Rare Diseases & Mental Health Partnership Network" to raise visibility, define actions and support the rare disease community to become a 'mentally healthy community'. The Network will bring together experts who can identify best practice and evidence-based tools and co-create the Toolkit.

The Rare Barometer Survey Platform could be used to identify the specific unmet mental health needs of the rare disease community. Rare diseases could be one of the 'use cases' harnessed to demonstrate proof of concept that the Toolkit can be applicability, tailored and scalability to meet the specific needs of different vulnerable populations before being published.

- Reducing and preventing of the costs in the health, social and educational system and employment sectors, due to unmanaged psychological impact.
- Enable affected individuals and families to be active in society, continuing to work, contributing taxes and living independently.

How will it contribute towards a comprehensive approach to mental health?

The Toolkit would:

- Draw on the existing best practice in health promotion and prevention tools to mitigate the socioeconomic and environmental determinants and associated risk factors for poor mental health.
- Use e-learning tools and materials accessible via online and downloadable by schools, employers and health and social agencies, CSOs and patient groups and communities.

Supported by psychological informed resources:

- Educational pathways and tools
- Self-care tools and coping strategies
- Family-focused psychological support tools
- Peer support and communication material
- Simple guides for early detection of drivers for poor mental health and wellbeing
- Educational factsheets and tools on the specificities of vulnerable groups
- Potential interventions to reduce the psychological impact on parents, caregivers and the wider family.

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

EURORDIS could support the implementation of a Mental Health & Wellbeing Toolkit for Vulnerable Populations by tailoring the resources and tools to the needs of the rare disease community.

EURORDIS could utilise the network of European federations, national alliances and individual patient and family groups and harness its various communication channels to promote a Mentally Health & Wellbeing Toolkit for Rare Diseases through our network of patient groups, during Rare Disease Day & Rare Disease Week, at EURORDIS Membership Meeting and European Conferences for Rare Diseases, to increase the accessibility and implementation of the toolkit beyond the 30 million people living with a rare disease in the EU.



GLOBALLY MINDED FOUNDATION (<https://www.globallyminded.org/home/>)

BACKGROUND

The EU should have a dedicated platform which reports annually in detail indicators related to the public mental health sectors of its member states (e.g., number of visits per year, number of specialists, epidemiology of conditions, legislation regarding mental health and others). This platform will help the advocacy of organizations, institutions, and individuals for improvements in-country; it will give an overall picture of progress in real time; and it will help identify significant improvements and pinpoint innovations which can be implemented in other countries. Currently, there are no such monitoring initiatives at the EU level. Global reports on mental health such as those compiled by WHO and UNICEF provide very general and infrequent data which does not offer deep dive opportunities but can serve as the basis of the platform. Detailed reporting can be done by responsible institutions and independent organizations in order to triangulate data and locate differences. New indicators can be introduced through polling concerned stakeholders. The platform can become an information hub for implementation and innovation projects, which can serve as inspiration for cross-country partnerships and adopting new approaches.

CONCRETE ACTION

Idea: Provide a shared platform for monitoring indicators of the progress in the public mental health sector across EU members

Scope: All EU member countries and their public mental health sectors

Rationale: "What gets measured gets done"

- **EU added value and potential benefits:**

Endorsed and supported by the EU, a reporting platform for public mental health would unite organizations and institutions across the EU in advocacy action, sharing ideas and projects, and aligning their activities with EU-wide initiatives and common actions in the field of health and research. The benefits are strengthening the EU level of commitment to citizens' mental health – an aspect of health which grows ever more important in burden of disease and quality of life – and the opportunity to easily access and employ data on public mental health in member states for its purposes, as well as mobilize organizations, maintain constant dialogue, and monitor progress.

Shining a light on developments in the EU public mental health sector will increase accountability, show need for action in real time and allow for member states to learn from each other in implementing improvements

CHALLENGES

The platform would help address the problem of insufficient data in-country and across countries regarding the public mental health sector. It will bring to light on an annual basis the changes and trends, the innovations and implementations happening, and inform advocacy by identifying the missing pieces for a comprehensive and community-oriented mental health system. Taking a global mental health approach to Europe, the platform would answer the challenge of cross-country comparison and provide a starting point for those seeking to improve mental health service delivery.

The platform will identify the missing pieces for comprehensive mental health systems.

IMPLEMENTATION

Although small, the Globally Minded Foundation has expertise in global mental health around the world and can help develop the indicators, platform contents and the methodology for collecting the data. Conceptualizing the platform will need input from all concerned stakeholders, as well as commitment to submitting the information on a regular basis. The Foundation can conceive ways of getting stakeholders involved and invested in using the platform for their project-related and advocacy-related needs.

The Globally Minded Foundation can help develop the indicators and the methodology for collecting the data.



TRIPLE L - A COHORT-BASED EUROPEAN MENTAL HEALTH KNOWLEDGE GENERATOR

BACKGROUND

Prevention: Our health systems and our health sciences are disease- and treatment-oriented
 → a stronger prevention focus has potential to avoid individual suffering and economic burden

Resilience: Despite exposure to environmental adversity and other risks, many individuals stay mentally healthy
 → understanding resilience can inform prevention strategies

Resilience factors: We know a lot about risk factors for mental illness, but much less about protective factors
 → identification of resilience factors must be a priority of mental health science

Resilience processes: Staying healthy despite risk exposure results from complex and dynamic adaptation processes in which intra- and extra-individual (social, psychological, biological) factors interact
 → studying resilience requires process observation over time and at high temporal resolution (Longitudinal observational studies), permitting to identify early warning signals, tipping points, and successful adaptation

Resilience studies: Existing large cohorts are cross-sectional or have few time points (e.g., UK Biobank) and do not permit process observation. Existing highly resolved longitudinal cohorts are too small or only target specific populations or are too short in duration.
 → Europe needs to join forces to lift this roadblock

CONCRETE ACTION

- Idea
 - Pan-European mental health cohort in stressor-exposed at-risk individuals
 - **LARGE**
 - **LONG**
 - **LONGITUDINAL**
 - Repeated multimodal characterization (soc, psycho, bio) at high temp. resolution
- EU added value and potential benefits:
 - Unique insights into mechanisms of mental health and resilience
 - Knowledge source for development of prevention strategies
 - Placing EU mental health research at top of the world

CHALLENGES

- Mechanistic insights will guide activities for: Promotion of mental health, early detection, and prevention of mental health problems

IMPLEMENTATION

- Coordination by (proposed): International Resilience Alliance, EU; Leibniz Institute for Resilience Research, DE; Radboud University Nijmegen, NL; Charité Berlin, DE; Free University Amsterdam, NL; Erasmus University Rotterdam, NL; University Zurich, CH; *et al.*
- Based on experiences with: EU projects DynaMORE, RESPOND, FAMILY, APPWAG, IMAGEN, STRATIF, environMENTAL, Police in Action, *a.o.*



EUROPEAN BRAIN COUNCIL (<https://www.braincouncil.eu/>)

BACKGROUND

One in eight individuals worldwide lives with a mental health condition. For many European countries, the prevalence is even higher, with one in four people reporting mental health problems (1). Three-quarters of mental health disorders manifest before age 25 (2). While youth have been relatively protected from the lethality of the COVID-19 virus itself, they have been more vulnerable to the psychological impact (3). Depression and anxiety went up by more than 25% in the first year of the pandemic alone (4). The combination of these dynamics resulted in the mental health crisis or a secondary pandemic for youth. Good brain health plays a significant role in an individual's well-being and profoundly impacts the collective economy and society. Neuroscience and brain development are key to address the crisis. Brain development does not stop at birth and some aspects continue throughout infancy, childhood, and adolescence, allowing the full development of cognitive functions. Ongoing progress in neurobiology and cognitive neuroscience allow the design of better prevention and intervention strategies to help avoid brain deficits and/or limit their impact and maintain brain health. Brain capital is a conceptual framework incorporating brain health and brain skills in the knowledge economy (5). This is based on the understanding that our brains are our greatest asset. It provides an approach for defining, quantifying, and addressing mental health problems. Brain capital can be driven into policies and investments, especially as it goes beyond medicalization by bringing a truly disciplinary approach to understanding the links between health, economy, well-being, and equity. Therefore, a brain capital policy laboratory for youth would be a platform that aims to develop and implement policies and strategies to enhance the knowledge, skills, and abilities of young people, in order to build their human and social capital and enable them to contribute more effectively to the economy and society.

CONCRETE ACTION

• Idea:

A policy lab can be defined as a living lab aiming to adapt in concrete life an open innovation ecosystem based on a systemic user co-creation approach, integrating research and innovation processes in real life communities and settings. Objective will be to examine both clinical practice-based and real-life environments where new solutions can be developed via human-centered innovations.

How will this help to strengthen action on mental health at EU level and enhance the

• EU added value and potential benefits:

This initiative will enable joint value co-creation, rapid prototyping, and validation for scale innovation and businesses by bringing together the youth including patients, families, research organizations, cities, and regions across Europe. Understanding the brain, brain health, and brain disorders is essential to improving health and quality of life. It also offers a pathway to understanding the new economic and social reality. An economy and a society based around emotional and cognitive wellbeing would enable to create a stronger, more resilient future for European Citizens. Already prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the societal cost of mental health conditions exceeded 4% of GDP (over EUR 600 billion) across the 28 European Union countries (6). This activity as per the recommendations and implementation would aim to demonstrate a return on investment.

CHALLENGES

Mental health conditions are not only prevalent, enduring in nature and complex, but also closely interconnected with many aspects of life, and therefore disabling. They increase the risk for school drop-out, are a major cause of work absenteeism, presenteeism and incapacity to work, are closely related to poverty, negatively impact family lives, increase social isolation, and decrease life expectancy by 15 to 20 years, mostly due to somatic disorders (7). Early detection and management of risk factors is the best way to prevent brain conditions. Despite this, research on risks to brain health continues to focus on middle aged and older adults. As a result, we are faced with a knowledge gap about brain health in children and young adults. Life course models of mental health are necessary focusing on early risk factors. Good brain health is a state of optimal cognitive, sensory, social-emotional, and behavioral functioning. Understanding brain health in children and young adults is critical as they have the potential to make early and long-term changes to minimize risk. This is particularly important now, given the avoidable costs and the widespread and serious consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on young peoples' mental health.

IMPLEMENTATION

Investing in building European brain capital is fundamental to meeting these societal challenges and for driving innovation. Our organization would set up a Task Force and coordinate the recommendations for a Call to Action. This Task Force aims to develop a Brain Strategy to transform the European brain capital via a suite of policy, data and project recommendations. The Task Force will consider opportunities across the lifespan and across sectors. Task Force members would include regulators, policy makers, patient associations, scientists, clinicians, educators, economists, as well as financial and private sector representatives. Selected international experts would be invited to contribute. This proposed activity is in line with the objectives and priorities of the EU4Health Programme.

mental health of European citizens?

How will it contribute towards a comprehensive approach to mental health?

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



MENTAL HEALTH EUROPE (mhe-sme.org)

BACKGROUND

Mental health is shaped by life events and socio-economic and environmental determinants. Hence, to effectively tackle the challenges that our societies are facing, different stakeholders from various fields - beyond health- need to be actively engaged and work together. This includes those who have historically lacked a voice – people experiencing mental health problems and their supporters – who need to be meaningfully participating in every process that impacts on them. Mental Health Europe (MHE) calls for co-creation, i.e., “a collaborative approach involving **all actors** in mental health working together on an **equal basis** to develop and implement **policies, services and communication** that foster positive mental health **according to a psychosocial model and human rights-based approach**”. The concept of co-creation emphasises the **redistribution of power** of all participants in the process and the attribution of **equal value** to the different expertise each brings. **Learned and experiential knowledge are valued equally**. Co-creation can and should be adopted in policy and decision-making, rethinking service provision, communicating about mental health, In addition to being a human rights imperative (“*Nothing about us, without us*”), co-creation gets better results and brings benefits to those involved. Co-creation is a **path to transformation of our mental health systems**, a path towards better mental health for all.

CONCRETE ACTION

▪ Idea:

To increase knowledge, skills and confidence for putting co-creation into practice, MHE can provide training and exchanges on co-creation to different stakeholders: civil society; people with lived experience; professionals and policymakers (from health and social care, but also education, employment and other fields, according to a “Mental Health in all policies approach”).

▪ EU added value and potential benefits:

Across Europe, we need to address pressing challenges and we cannot continue doing business as usual. We need to transform our mental health systems towards person-centred, human rights compliant and recovery-oriented systems. Co-creation is the way forward and we know that it

How will this help to strengthen action on mental health at EU level and enhance the mental health of European citizens?

works, if applied correctly and systematically (hence the importance to provide trainings and exchanges). Co-creation has many advantages, for the individuals, our healthcare systems and society. By allowing everyone to remove the labels attached to them, it entails more equal, collaborative and effective partnerships of care. This makes space to expertise by experience, thus bringing back the focus on what people need and contributing to improved health systems. Co-creation can also facilitate social justice and support community development, as it allows the creation of egalitarian relationships within society. Hence, co-creation has both social and economic benefits. Socially, there is the potential for empowerment to be strengthened, equality to be increased and responsibility to be shared. The trust in the EU project will increase. Economically, it is an efficient approach because it incorporates the perspective and preferences of both service users and providers, thus ensuring a more useful allocation of public resources.

CHALLENGES

A key success factor of co-creation is **the empowerment of people** with lived experience, so that they can bring a unique and much needed perspective to the table. Co-creation in mental health is revolutionary, given a lack of joint work history and a belief that having a mental health problem renders people unable to have a meaningful contribution to offer, which all too often also becomes an internalised identity. However, this is not enough. Co-creation goes a step further because it establishes that all the actors have to be empowered to work together on an equal basis. No more labels: we are all different but of equal value, as we all we all bring expertise from our experiences, skills, and learnings. Our action addresses the challenge of destigmatisation, but also the priorities of promotion, prevention, and access to care. Indeed, co-creation is a tool, which can be used when designing policies or services, to ensure that they respond to real needs.

IMPLEMENTATION

Co-creation in mental health is not simple to achieve. Lack of commitment, of understanding and of resources are the most common barriers. By providing evidence from successful applications of co-creation, we can persuade stakeholders about the benefits of this approach. By providing training and learning exchanges on how co-creation can be applied in practice at all levels, we can provide the needed skills. With the right support, e.g., fully funded grants from the EC, MHE can provide support on co-creation to interested stakeholders. We can also offer guidelines and a toolkit on concrete tips and tools to apply co-creation in practice. Indeed, if there is no universally agreed formula for its implementation, there are key principles to be followed. We can also provide evidence on the societal and economic benefits arising from co-creation and share success stories. In our network, we have examples of co-creation successfully applied at policy and service level (e.g., in Ireland), as well as co-creation at community level (e.g., in Slovakia). Sharing the experiences of our members (what the drivers for change were, what challenges they faced and how they overcame them) can act as inspiration for other countries.

How will it contribute towards a comprehensive approach to mental health?

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



EFPA (<https://www.efpa.eu/>)

CONCRETE ACTION

Idea:

- 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.

EU added value and potential benefits:

- The European Commission's 'A comprehensive approach to mental health' call for evidence is a welcome initiative and has received many valuable responses from stakeholders.
- However, due to the vast scope of the topic of mental health, a challenge is created in identifying how best to collate these submissions and find a clear path forward.
- Trying to prioritise all suggestions 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.

How will this help to strengthen action on mental health at EU level and enhance the mental health of European citizens?

CHALLENGES

Seven pillars of an EU mental health strategy are proposed:

- **1. Mental health commitment:** Mental health should feature in all EU policies. It should be properly funded, resourced, and measured.
- **2. Societal crises response:** Mental health should be a core part of any policy response to current and future societal crises.
- **3. Community-oriented services:** WHO's call for more community-oriented mental health services should be supported.
- **4. The workplace:** Mental health in the workplace should be a priority, as demonstrated by the H-WORK project.
- **5. Climate change:** Support programmes—for children and young people especially—should be introduced.
- **6. Training standards and regulation:** Mental health practitioner training should be based on a recognised standard, properly funded and regulated.
- **7. Equality of access:** Citizens should be engaged as partners and have equal access to appropriate mental healthcare. Digital and physical contexts should receive equal consideration.

How will it contribute towards a comprehensive approach to mental health?

IMPLEMENTATION

- 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 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.

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