

STATEMENT on the urgent need for an EU Mental Health Strategy

The MEP Alliance for Mental Health calls on the Commission to respond **favourably and swiftly to the invitation to propose a comprehensive EU Mental Health Strategy**, as put forward by the EPSCO Council Conclusions on the Economy of Well-being, adopted on 24 October 2019.

The Alliance warmly welcomes this invitation as it comes at a time of a decreasing EU-level focus on mental health – at a time when this topic should be considered a **health priority**.

Mental health should be considered **as important as physical health**. However, the current EU-level approach – i.e. addressing mental health as part of the overall chronic disease agenda - **does not suffice** to appropriately and effectively address the urgent and crucial need for better mental health across the board.

A future Mental Health Strategy should be **comprehensive and address mental health in all its aspects**, i.e. prevention of mental ill health and mental health promotion, treatment and care; it should also **cover all relevant policy sectors beyond health**, including social, employment, finance, education and human rights policies.

The MEP Alliance for Mental Health is aware of the Commission's limited remit in the field of mental health. However, the EU level:

- can pay **attention to the impact of all its policies and initiatives on mental health** and vice versa;
- can **mainstream mental health into wider policy development** (social, education, finance, research, human rights...);
- can provide **financial support to relevant initiatives and projects**;
- can support **awareness raising and help reduce stigma**, e.g. by means of a dedicated European Year for Good Mental Health
- can encourage to invest in mental health competences of professionals in the fields of social protection, education, finance, research and human rights;
- can support **data collection and research**;
- can help collect and disseminate **good practice**.

The above could be the building blocks of an EU Mental Health Strategy, which should also call for **national action programmes** – similar to what is already happening in the areas of rare disease and cancer.

Preventing mental ill-health and promoting good mental health will have a huge and positive impact – both in terms of **individual well-being** (of those affected as well as their loved ones) as well as in terms of **labour market, social cohesion, economic growth and development**.

During the recent Parliamentary Hearings, the Alliance took note of Health Commissioner-designate's remarks regarding her willingness to do her utmost to put mental health back on the EU policy agenda.

We therefore urge the Commission to **take action now**, working with relevant stakeholders – e.g. representative organisations of patients, carers and healthcare professionals, academia - to ensure comprehensive, appropriate and relevant action.

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