Mental health

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The Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted an own-initiative report by Sara CERDAS (S&D, PT) on mental health.

According to Members, everyone can face different mental stressors and risk factors at different phases of their lives, which can increase the risk of more severe or even chronic mental health conditions. Mental health and well-being is shaped by a combination of socio-economic, environmental, biological and genetic factors.

Work and workplace

The Commission is called on to propose a legislative initiative, in consultation with the social partners, on the management of psychosocial risks and well-being at work, including online, in order to effectively prevent psychosocial risks in the workplace, provide training for management and workers, periodically assess progress and improve the working environment. The report further called on the Commission to adopt guidelines to support the access and return to work of people with mental health conditions, including more flexible work practices.

Member States are recommended to introduce measures to provide flexible work practices that support employees who suffer from disease, physical or emotional pain, stress or other health crises.

Elderly people

Members noted with concern that, in the context of an ageing society, the risks of mental health conditions in the elderly are increasing, including isolation and stigmatisation, which can lead to abuse, neglect and difficulties in coping with depression and other disorders. The report also noted with alarm that suicide rates among elderly people are high and believe it is therefore essential to promote the active participation of elderly people in community life, affordable and equal access to healthcare, as well as public support structures, community care, and infrastructure equipped with mental health specialists.

Members States are called on to develop national dementia plans in order to expand early diagnosis, support and care for adults with dementia.

Mental healthcare professionals

The report highlighted the need to ensure further investment in public health services and that they are staffed with sufficient mental health professionals. Members acknowledge that the shortages in the mental health workforce undermines the accessibility of mental health services. In this regard, they stressed the need for better trained professionals in the EU by ensuring training, re-training, certification and capacity building schemes for staff in order to increase the number of qualified professionals.

Early diagnosis and intervention

Mental health conditions are currently under- and misdiagnosed or are diagnosed late in the EU, resulting in significant individual and societal consequences, making this an issue that needs urgent attention. The report underlined the importance of early diagnosis and intervention for mental health conditions with a focus on vulnerable groups in society, as early intervention is cost-effective and may prevent poor outcomes.

Early identification and treatment of depression and substance use disorders are essential to reduce the suicide rate by one third by 2030, in line with the Member States' commitment under the WHO Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2030 and target 3.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Mental health support and treatment

Members stressed that people with mental health conditions and psychosocial disabilities have the right to receive evidence-based treatment and support tailored to their needs. The integration of family and **caregiver support** services into mental health service delivery models should be encouraged.

Mental health in the EU

The report invited the Commission to draw up a long-term, comprehensive and integrated **European Mental Health Strategy** focusing particularly on the most vulnerable groups in society. The European Mental Health Strategy should focus on many areas in which young people's mental health can be improved in coordination with the European Education Area with specific focus on bullying and cyber-bullying in schools.

Financial support

Members consider that:

- sufficient funding should be allocated to match the scale of the challenge and that mental health must be further addressed in future financial programmes such as the EU4Health programme 2028-2034 and Horizon Europe;

- the EU lacks a direct fund for mental health research and innovation and called on the Commission to convert the flagship initiatives into concrete actions with adequate financial support for vulnerable groups and to create a mission on Mental Health from the Horizon Europe programme and the future programme in the Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2035.