Mental health

2023/2074(INI) - 12/12/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 482 votes to 94, with 32 abstentions, a resolution on mental health.

Preventing mental health conditions and promoting mental health for all

Members recalled that 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.

The resolution stressed that addressing mental health conditions requires a thorough understanding of the different determinants of mental health and that a cross-sectoral approach is needed to prevent and mitigate the impact on individuals, communities and societies through an approach aimed at **integrating mental health into all policies**.

Members stressed the importance of a **biopsychosocial approach** to mental health and of social policies that tackle the risk factors for social exclusion. They also called on Member States to improve access to mental health services for vulnerable populations and groups suffering from certain pathologies.

Parliament encouraged Member States to develop policies that prioritise the **mental health of children, adolescents and young adults** by strengthening child protection services to prevent mental disorders and suicides, and by providing access to low-cost or free mental health services. It called for the strengthening of **support, listening and alert platforms** for victims of sexual and gender-based violence, and stressed the importance of combating gender inequality and violence against women. It also called for action to be taken against online hate speech, particularly targeting ethnic minorities and racially discriminated persons, the LGBTQIA+ community and other vulnerable groups.

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 resolution 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 resolution 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.

Strengthening mental health systems

The resolution stressed that the principles of equitable, affordable and easily accessible care, empowerment of people with mental health problems, choice of desired treatment and **patient-centred approach** should form the basis of mental health systems throughout the EU.

Members stressed the need to invest more in **public health services** and to provide them with a sufficient number of mental health professionals. The European Commission should work with Member States to improve the coordinated response to the shortage of mental health professionals, including pan-European mapping and best practice.

Early diagnosis and intervention

The resolution 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. Members recalled the need for prevention at an early age via the education system.

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 resolution 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.

Lastly, Parliament called on the Commission to follow the recommendations of the Conference on the Future of Europe and designate next year as the **European Year of Mental Health**.