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MENTAL HEALTH

STATE OF PLAY: It's World Mental Health Day and the pandemic has taken a big toll on people's mental health around the world. Rates of depression and anxiety increased more than 25 percent in the first year of the crisis, adding to the nearly 1 billion people who already had a mental illness, according to a World Health Organization [report](#). In Europe, even before the pandemic, 85 million people suffered with a mental health condition, [said](#) Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides.

Mounting pressures: But the pandemic isn't the only stressor weighing on people's minds. The cost of living crisis is also likely to impact people's mental health, warned Eurofound in a [blog post](#) on Friday. "The COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and its consequences, the energy crisis and worries about the economic difficulties: all these events take a toll on our mental health," Kyriakides said.

Can't catch a break: Access to mental health care isn't looking great across the bloc, with mental health services having the third highest backlog after hospital or specialist care, and dental care, according to a July 2022 [report](#) by Eurofound.

Some help: The EU has allocated €27 million toward mental health care. And it's launched a Healthier Together initiative to help tackle mental health and neurological diseases, the health commissioner pointed out. "This is a good start, but we can and must do more," she added, calling for mental health to be a priority not just today but every day.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS: Mental Health Europe is holding an event at the European Parliament [today](#), co-hosted by MEPs and discussing refugees' and migrants' mental health. These groups "should be able to access mental health services and support on an equal basis with others," said Tilly Metz MEP (Greens/European Free Alliance group).

Political priority: Kyriakides, who will be speaking at the event, underlined that mental health has been made "a key political priority for the Commission, to change the way we approach and support the protection of our mental health." Metz will be joined by Estrella Durá Ferrandis MEP (Socialists & Democrats group) in moderating the debates.

PROTECT THE YOUNG: Young people have been especially impacted by events these past years. "Multiple crises of recent years have placed an additional heavy burden on adults and especially on children and adolescents," Austria's health ministry [said](#) on Sunday.

Austria launched a one-stop shop this year for young people with mental health problems, allowing them to request access to available therapy. The project is going "very well," State Secretary for Youth Claudia Plakolm said, and she was "very confident" the health ministry will be able to continue this project, budget depending.

In Spain ... Health Minister Carolina Darias will participate in an evening of panel debates, alongside the ministers of universities and education, to discuss young people's mental health and how best to manage it.

Growing demands for help: Use of mental health services by people aged 18-25 years old was nearly a fifth higher in 2021-22 than before the pandemic, NHS England [said](#), while referrals for mental health crisis services also rose by a fifth compared to pre-pandemic levels. Claire Murdoch, England's mental health boss, urged university students to seek help when they need it.

What else? The NHS is also rolling out five mental health hubs in student-populated cities and on Sunday launched a new website, [Every Mind Matters](#), directing people to tips to help deal with stress and anxiety.

Link [here](#).