



**Mental
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Equal rights.
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For all.

September 2024

Belgian Presidency Scorecard



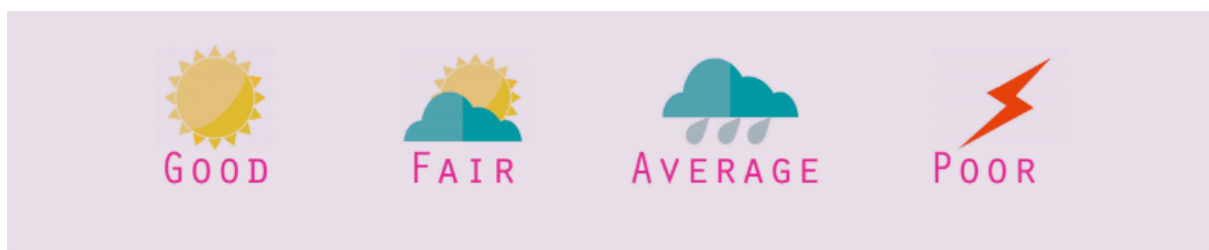
Belgium Presidency Scorecard

(January- July 2024)

Mental Health & Human Rights

In order to engage with and analyse the performance of the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU), Mental Health Europe has devised a scorecard system through which we evaluate each Presidency's commitment to and promotion of mental health. The performance of each Presidency is rated based on the following criteria:

- *Promotion of mental health and well-being;*
- *Commitment to the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities;*
- *The involvement and support of empowerment of mental health service users*



Introduction / Looking back – Expectations and Outcomes

Belgium assumed the Presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2024. Being the last presidency before the 2024 European Elections, Belgium had the challenge to conclude on important dossiers for the legislature and the opportunity to use its presidency to help in shaping the future of the EU.

Belgium established 6 priorities for its mandate: rule of law, democracy and unity; strengthening competitiveness; green and just transitions; reinforcing the social and health agendas; protecting people and borders; promoting a global Europe. The Belgian Presidency also showed their commitment to mental health. Not only the topic was included in their programme across sectors, but the Presidency also gave their patronage to the 2024 edition of [European Mental Health Week](#).

Mental Health Europe welcomed the commitment of the Belgian Presidency to work on equality files with the first EPSCO council focused on equality policy.

Promotion of mental health and well-being

(GOOD)

The European Commission Communication on a Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health in June 2023 put mental health high on the EU Agenda and mental health was mentioned in the [trio programme](#) with a specific focus on mental health at work. Following the Council Conclusions on the interconnection between mental health and employment adopted under the Spanish Presidency (see here the [Spanish Presidency scorecard](#)), the Belgian Presidency kept mental health at work a priority. The Presidency organised a [conference on mental health at work, bringing together institutions, social partners, civil society and experts by experience to discuss the best way forward. The](#) ambition was to put stress and burnout at work high into the next European Commission agenda, calling for a directive on the matter. This call was reiterated in the [La Hulpe Declaration](#) on the on the future of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Mental health was also present as a stand-alone item in the La Hulpe declaration, with a call to go further than the Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health. Mental Health Europe welcomes this inclusion that shows a commitment from the Belgium Presidency to address mental health in a holistic manner taking into account the socioeconomic determinants.

The relation between mental health and the digital world was also explored with an event organised during the [European Digital and Media Literacy Conference](#) with a meeting of the EU Expert group on Media Literacy, the [Content With Conscience](#) event, in which Mental Health Europe was represented, and through the adoption [of Council Conclusions on support for influencers as online content creators](#), where the potential harmful influence of online content creators on the mental and physical health of their audience was highlighted.

Finally, Mental Health Europe was invited to a high-level conference on [Healthcare needs as drivers for healthcare policy and innovation](#) to highlight the need to develop alternatives to medication in mental health care and talk about how a holistic approach is essential due to the increasing burden of disease and current inadequacies in mental health care. This provided a space to discuss the much-needed change in how mental health is understood and how mental health problems are addressed, moving away from a biomedical disease based approach towards a psychosocial recovery oriented one.

Finally, on 21 June 2024, health, social, and employment ministers approved Council Conclusions on the [Future of the European Health Union](#), calling on the European Commission to keep health, including mental health as a priority in its upcoming five-year term. The Conclusions contain a clear reference to the socioeconomic and commercial determinants of health, in addition to healthy lifestyles and were mostly [welcome by Mental Health Europe](#).

Commitment to the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities (FAIR)

The [European Disability Card and European Parking card](#) were adopted under the leadership of the Belgian Presidency. It was a flagship initiative under the European Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Using the card, people with disabilities should have access to the same special conditions and preferential treatment as residents of the country they visit, for instance for public transport and preferential treatment at cultural, leisure and sports events and activities. The relevance of the cards for persons with psychosocial disabilities has been assessed by Mental Health Europe.

The Belgian Presidency also organised a Conference linked to the European Disability Platform: [Towards full inclusion of persons with disabilities – the European Pillar of Social Rights and beyond](#) where they reflected on employment and free movement and looked at strategies for the rights of persons with disabilities.

On the 13th and 14th of March, inclusion in the digital world was discussed at the [Conference Building inclusive pathways for better digital services](#), inclusion of persons with disabilities was notably discussed through showcasing projects.

The La Hulpe Declaration also called for better mainstreaming of the UNCRPD in all policies and for an ambitious second phase of the European Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

While these are important developments, there was no specific focus on psychosocial disabilities.

The involvement and support of empowerment of mental health service users (GOOD)

On March 19, 2024, the Conference on Disability Rights included organisations of persons with disabilities as it was organised in the Framework of the EU Disability Platform. The Belgian Presidency also made an effort to involve people with lived experience and their representative organisations in the preparation of the January conference on [conference on mental health at work through consultations and panel discussion](#). Apart from this, representative and representative organisation were invited to speak from the point of view of people with lived experience. Overall, it is not clear to what extent users of mental health services and expert by experience were engaged during the Belgium Presidency. We recommend that for future Presidencies and activities of the Council, these efforts and commitments will not only be limited to the possibility to speak at events but also to the overall organisation and delivery of activities. This could take the form of a full co-creation approach to ensure that experts by experience, supporters and all key actors are meaningfully involved throughout the process.

Conclusions

The run up to the European Elections 2024 have been a highly strategic period and the Belgian Presidency's work on mental health help keeping the topic on the agenda. Following the example set by the Spanish Presidency, Mental Health Europe commends the work of the Belgian Presidency to include mental health as a cross-cutting consideration in their work and their ambition to a *future where mental health is not just a consideration, but a cornerstone of a prosperous and inclusive European society*¹. We are particularly pleased that a follow up to the Comprehensive Approach on Mental Health was mention as part of the reflection on the future of the European Pillar of Social Rights and we call on future Presidencies to keep the mental health in all policies approach and to commit to address the socioeconomic determinants. This is crucial to move towards a Europe where everybody's mental health thrive through their life course as outlined in [Mental Health Europe's](#).

¹ <https://belgian-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/news/a-healthier-and-more-inclusive-europe/>



Mental Health Europe is the largest independent network organisation representing people with mental health problems, their supporters, care professionals, service providers and human rights experts in the field of mental health across Europe. Its vision is to strive for a Europe where everyone's mental health and wellbeing flourishes across their life course. Together with members and partners, Mental Health Europe leads in advancing a human right, community-based, recovery-oriented, and psychosocial approach to mental health and wellbeing for all.

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