

CONFERENCE

PUTTING MENTAL HEALTH AT THE HEART OF EUROPE: Strengthening Preparedness for EU Polycrises.

30 January 2024

9:30 - 13:30 CET

Hybrid

European Economic Social Committee,

Rue Belliard 99/101, 1040 Bruxelles



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MENTAL HEALTH QUALITY PRACTICES



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Putting Mental Health at the Heart of Europe: Strengthening Preparedness for EU Polycrises.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the prevalence of mental ill-health, which was already a major contributor to disability in Europe. Vulnerable groups—including children, migrants, individuals with disabilities, older people, and those facing socio-economic challenges—have been disproportionately affected, revealing significant disparities in both the availability and access to mental health services. Furthermore, healthcare professionals have encountered considerable challenges during this time.


The conference will address the urgent need for resilient mental health systems in the face of polycrises such as pandemics, wars, and climate disasters. It will explore how innovative mental health practices can drive policy reforms and bridge gaps in public health, particularly for vulnerable populations. Testimonies providing firsthand evidence of how beneficiary-focused, quality practices have addressed crisis-intensified mental health challenges will enrich the discussion.

The event will also emphasise the need to scale up these practices across the EU, as public health emergencies disproportionately impact vulnerable communities, exacerbating mental health and social inequities. It will serve as a platform to advance these priorities, strengthening Europe's commitment to mental health and resilience through strategic collaboration, investment, and policy innovation.

The conference will engage a diverse array of stakeholders, including practitioners, providers, policymakers, insurers, and investors, to influence decision-makers and promote sustainable cross-border collaboration for a more resilient mental health system in Europe.


Event programme

Draft agenda

- 9:00-9:30 **Registration and coffee**
- 9:30-9:35 **Welcome and Introduction**
- **Pietro Barbieri**, Member of Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship (SOC) at the European Economic and Social Committee
- 9:35-9:55 **Setting the Scene**
- Representative of European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA)
 - **Claudia Marinetti**, Director, Mental Health Europe
- 9:55-10:45 **Session 1 (hybrid)**
- Impact of Effective Mental Health Practices During Polycrises:
Personal Testimonies**
- This session will offer a snapshot of beneficiary-focused best practices for addressing mental health challenges during crises, complemented by personal testimonies that underscore the transformative impact of these - quality interventions. Additionally, the session will explore how innovative mental health strategies can drive policy reform and enhance public health services, especially for vulnerable populations.
- 10:45-11:30 **Session 2 (onsite only)**
- Engagement and Synergy Sessions**
- The session provides an interactive platform for participants to connect with speakers, explore best practices, and build networks with similar organisations. It includes four thematic tables, each showcasing a specific best practice, where participants can circulate to gain a well-rounded view of mental health practices within the MENTALITY project. Project representatives from Slovakia, Greece, Poland, Latvia, and Romania will share insights from their initiatives, focusing on unique challenges and successes to foster cross-country learning and inspire innovative approaches to mental health.
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Event programme

Draft agenda

- 11:30-12:10 **Session 3 (hybrid)**
Strengthening European Mental Health Preparedness in a period of polycrisis
This session will bring together policymakers and other experts to discuss how inspiring mental health practices can stimulate policy reforms and address gaps in public health, especially for vulnerable populations. The discussion will focus on the urgent need for stronger mental health systems during crises such as pandemics, wars, and climate disasters, enhancing resilience through policy adaptations, preparedness strategies, and lessons learned from recent emergencies.
- 12:10-12:20 **Q&A session**
- 12:20-12:30 **Closing remarks**
Hannes Jarke, Project Coordinator - Mental Health Policy,
EuroHealthNet
- 12:30-13:30 **Light lunch**
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Evidence-Based Mental Health Quality Practices of the Mentality project

Interactive map of centres providing mental health support

The interactive map of mental health support centres (MapaWsparcia.PL practice) was originally developed in Poland. The MENTALITY project facilitated the adaptation and replication of this practice in Romania and Slovakia. MapaWsparcia.PL is a non-profit, dedicated interactive map that identifies facilities offering **free mental health support to individuals experiencing mental health distress and those in vulnerable situations**, particularly during times of crisis.

Practice owner: [The Human Foundation, Poland](#)

Implementers: [League for Mental Health Slovakia](#); [Estuar Foundation, Romania](#)

New approach to support care professional teams

The Dignity and Pride Programme in the Netherlands has introduced a novel approach called 'Team Reflection' to provide support for professional care teams in maintaining their well-being. The MENTALITY project has facilitated the adaptation and replication of this practice in Latvia. This approach is based on the premise that **healthcare professionals**, when surrounded by their team members and colleagues who have encountered similar challenges, are best equipped to cope with stress. Participants are equipped with **tools to address stress and are encouraged to support each other through a peer-to-peer approach** within their teams.

Practice owner: Noud van Hecke; René van het Erve (Dignity and Pride Programme)

Implementers: [Riga City Council, Latvia](#)

Tools designed to facilitate support for children, parents/caregivers and teachers

The "Hopeful, Healthy, and Happy Living and Learning Toolkit / Teachers' Guide" is a collaborative effort between REPSSI, APSSI, and the IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support (PS Centre), with support from MHPSS.net and funding from Education Cannot Wait. This comprehensive toolkit comprises the Guide for Teachers, the Parent-Caregiver Guide, and the Activity Guide for Teachers, Parents, and Children. Within the framework of the Mentality project, the teachers' guide was implemented in Slovakia and Greece as a tool to help teachers assist children in reflecting on their pandemic experiences and developing essential coping skills. It includes exercises and activities focused on **16 key life skills that aid in cognitive, social, and emotional development, with the goal of fostering resilience and enhancing psychosocial well-being**.

Practice owner: [Ea Suzanne Akasha, IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support](#)

Implementers: [League for Mental Health Slovakia](#); [Prolepsis Institute, Greece](#)

“Discover Your Potential:” measures to support mental health of migrants and refugees in times of crisis

A mental health support programme for migrants and refugees was created in Poland, drawing inspiration from the Mind-Spring training developed by the ARQ Nationaal Psychotrauma Centrum in the Netherlands. The new method, called “Discover Your Potential,” is a **preventive group intervention providing psychoeducation for migrant communities, targeting young adults aged 18-35**. Each session is led by two trainers: a mental health professional and a trainer with a migrant background. The inclusion of trainers with a migrant background, known as peer educators, adds significant value by ensuring that the content is effectively translated to meet the language and cultural needs of the participants.

Practice owner: *Inspired by* the Mind-Spring training by the ARQ Nationaal Psychotrauma Centrum, Netherlands

Implementers: [Polish Migration Forum, Poland](#)

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