

## RESOLUTION

### **Putting a spotlight on youth mental health**

*Adopted at the 13th YEPP Congress in Belgium, 03.07.2021*

#### **Recognizing that:**

- Mental health remains to be a relatively neglected and invisible area, despite being the leading cause of disability in Europe<sup>1</sup> (26% of all disease burden in the EU);
- Suffering from a severe mental health issue may result in a loss of life expectancy of 10 to 25 years<sup>2</sup>;
- A good mental health status is fundamental to promote and sustain our youth's biological, social, personal, educational and professional development and growth into the adulthood;
- Throughout life, one in every four people will suffer from any type of mental health disturbance, with 75% of these disturbances being triggered before the age of 25, and 50% before the age of 14<sup>3</sup>;
- Adolescent mental well-being has declined over the last years. One in four adolescents' reports feeling nervous, irritable or having trouble sleeping every week<sup>4</sup>;
- Bullying, cyber-bullying, eating disorders, learning disorders, addictions (screen, internet, alcohol, illicit drugs) are among the most relevant predisposing factors for mental health disturbances in youth population.

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<sup>1</sup> WHO. Situation of child and adolescent health in Europe. 2017

<sup>2</sup> Mental Health Europe. Ten things you should know about mental health. 2017

<sup>3</sup> Kessler, R. Age of onset of mental disorder. 2007

<sup>4</sup> WHO Europe/HBSC. Spotlight on adolescent health and well-being. 2020



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- It has been concluded that due to factors such as school closure, home isolation and increased unemployment, young people's mental health has significantly become worse over the pandemic period, with mental issues nearly doubling in most OECD countries<sup>5</sup>;
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death in young people, only next to road accidents. 9 out of the 10 countries in the world with the highest prevalence of suicide are in the European Region<sup>2</sup>.
- Moreover to being the leading cause of disability in Europe, mental health problems also display a huge economic burden in the EU of nearly 4% of the GDP, two thirds of which comprising indirect costs related to social security and loss of productivity<sup>6</sup>;

### **Acknowledging that:**

- Currently, there remain social, economic and geographic inequalities across EU countries with regards to youth mental health status and access to healthcare<sup>4</sup>. About 30% of people still can't effectively access mental health care in Europe<sup>2</sup>.
- Due to COVID-19, more than 70% of mental health services and intervention programmes in schools have been disrupted<sup>7</sup>.
- Over the last decade, several institutions such as WHO, EC, OECD have highlighted the importance of assuming mental health as a top public health priority, supported by robust evidence-based diagnostics and ambitious goals<sup>8,9</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> OECD. Supporting young people's mental health through the COVID crisis. 2021

<sup>6</sup> OECD/European Commission. Health at a Glance 2018.

<sup>7</sup> WHO. The impact of COVID-19 on mental, neurological and substance abuse services. 2020

<sup>8</sup> WHO. Mental Health Plan 2013-2020.

<sup>9</sup> EC. European Framework for Action on Mental Health and Wellbeing. 2016



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- There is consensus on the importance and effectiveness of approaches that prioritize prevention and promotion of well-being, with several scientifically validated intervention programmes being already under implementation in several EU countries<sup>10,11,12</sup>.
- With regards to health data and outcomes, there remain high discrepancies in mental health monitoring across EU Member States, as only a quarter of them collects data on young people who are being followed by a mental health professional<sup>1</sup>.

#### **YEPP calls on:**

- The EU and Member States to actively promote means to identify, address and mitigate mental health consequences of the pandemic among youth;
- The EU and Member States to assume a strong commitment of assuring equal and universal access to mental health care services;
- The EU and Member States to foster broad and effective best-practice sharing and implementation of validated school interventions to promote mental health and actively signal potential issues among students;
- The EU and Member States to work together with national stakeholders, from national authorities to patients' associations, on building a community mindset of awareness and prevention towards mental health, namely through stronger resource allocation to preventive interventions and coordinated health literacy and education programmes;

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<sup>10</sup> YAM. Youth Aware of Mental Health – an EU-wide RCT school intervention to promote mental health. 2021

<sup>11</sup> EC. Children and Mental Health. 2020

<sup>12</sup> EC. Public Health Best Practices Portal – accessed June 2021



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- The Commission to consider the construction of a renewed strategic agenda to prevent and tackle mental health burden in European population, specifically recognizing the importance of intervening among children and adolescents.