



EUROPEAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION

## PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 15 July 2020

A virtual meeting, co-organised today by the MEP Alliance for Mental Health, patient-lead organisation GAMIAN-Europe and the European Psychiatric Association addressed the mental health impact of the measures taken to best manage and control the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although life in many countries is returning back to a certain level of normality, the impact and effects of the pandemic – in particular that of the measures taken to best manage and control it - are by no means negligible. This is in line with the UN's stark warning about the world '*facing a pandemic of mental health problems brought about by the coronavirus situation worldwide*'.

While governments and authorities have taken measures to protect the physical health of their citizens, these measures on the other hand have had and are having mental health impacts.

What, for instance, does it mean when grandparents cannot see their grandchildren for an extended period of time – and vice versa? And how to cope with the passing of relatives, not being able to be there?

The consequences of 'promoted isolation', 'social distancing' and 'economic lockdown' will become apparent soon; therefore, the meeting provided a platform for some 130 representatives of patient, carer and health professionals organisations to discuss what lessons can be learnt from the impact of the measures to date.

In terms of the influence of the measures, specific attention was paid to the flow and content of the information provided to the general public. Furthermore, the way care - as well as access to care - was organised during the crisis was discussed as well, taking the views of those affected by mental ill health as well as those of their family carers as a starting point for the discussion.

Many different stakeholders, including the MEP Alliance for Mental Health co-chairs, spoke in the meeting, providing a wealth of different experiences, points of view and recommendations for action.

Welcoming the meeting and clear interest of the MEPs, GAMIAN-Europe President Hilikka Karkkainen stated that the meeting served to underline the need to put in place measures that proactively maintain mental health and prevent mental ill health, now as well as in the future. She also emphasised that '*the COVID-19 crisis has truly put the spotlight on mental health across the EU and indeed, the world– only emphasising the need for a comprehensive EU Mental Health Strategy, as called for by MEPs as well as by Member States*'.

Co-organiser Philip Gorwood – President of the European Psychiatric Association – underlined that the COVID19 created an unprecedented crisis which concerned everyone, but even more those with mental health disorders. *In order to face this problem, he stated, efforts have been made, mainly through increased collaboration between mental health workforces. Because this new challenge is yet to be resolved, the European Psychiatric Association is happy to continue to work with all stakeholders involved, to ensure the best possible treatment in all situations.*

The MEP Alliance for Mental Health will now bring the outcome of the discussions together in a Call to Action, which will be endorsed by participants and be used as a concrete tool for advocacy and awareness raising.

ENDS

## **Notes for editors**

### **1 Some more information on the MEP Alliance for Mental Health:**

The MEP Alliance for Mental Health (established in 2009 as the European Parliament Interest Group on Mental Health, Wellbeing and Brain Disorders) aims to bring together MEPs and relevant stakeholders advocate the development of sound EU policies which contribute to the prevention of mental ill health and ensure appropriate and high quality services and person-centred care, empowering those affected.

The Group meets 2-3 times a year; these meetings provide an opportunity to underline the need for and propose EU-level activities to take the field of mental health into account in a variety of areas and plan advocacy activities. The secretariat for this Group is being provided by GAMIAN-Europe. Some 30 MEPs are currently supporting the group.

Co-chairs: Alex Agius Saliba MEP (S&D-MT), Estrella Dura Ferrandis MEP (S&D-ES), Radka Maxova (CZ-NE), Maria Walsh MEP (PPE-IRL) and Tomas Zdechovsky (PPE-CZ)

[www.gamian.eu](http://www.gamian.eu)

### **2 Some information on GAMIAN-Europe**

GAMIAN-Europe (Global Alliance of Mental Illness Advocacy Networks-Europe), a patient-driven pan-European organisation, represents the interests of persons affected by mental illness and advocates for their rights. Its main activities relate to advocacy, information and education, developing partnerships and capacity building.

[www.gamian.eu](http://www.gamian.eu)

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### **3 Some information on the EPA**

The European Psychiatric Association is the main association representing psychiatry in Europe. The EPA's activities address the interests of psychiatrists in academia, research and practice throughout all stages of career development.

[www.europsy.net](http://www.europsy.net)

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### **4 A blueprint for an EU-level Action Programme**

Go [here](#).