



PRESS RELEASE – 10 September 2020

EPA COMMUNICATION ON THE OCCASION OF THE WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY

“SUICIDE IS AN UNNECESSARY DEATH. IT CAN BE PREVENTED.”

World Suicide Prevention Day, 10 September 2020 – Suicidal behaviour affects all ages and knows no boundaries. With a global suicide rate of 10.5 per 100,000 inhabitants and over 80,000 deaths every year, suicide remains one of the top leading causes of death globally. Furthermore, for each act of suicide, approximately 135 people suffer intense grief or are otherwise affected, which makes the suicide repercussion increase even more: up to 108 million people per year are profoundly impacted by suicidal behaviour. In times of crisis, as during the current COVID-19 health pandemic, suicide rates are expected to increase even more and represent a considerable threat to the wellbeing of the population.

On the occasion of World Suicide Prevention Day, the European Psychiatric Association (EPA) highlights the importance of increasing public awareness on suicide and promoting collaboration for the development of effective and evidence-based suicide prevention strategies.

“The European Psychiatric Association is involving its skills and energy to strengthen all efficient protective factors”, says Prof. Philip Gorwood, EPA President, “such as better mental health care for everyone, reinforced personal connections with loved ones, inclusion in supportive social networks, increased coping skills, and facilitated feelings of well-being. There are so many ways to reduce the risk of suicide; we could make a real difference by investing on prevention at all these levels!”

As stressed in a recent report authored by Prof. Danuta Wasserman, EPA Board Member, Past President (2013-2014) and Chair of the EPA Ethics Committee, the COVID-19 pandemic poses a special challenge to people around the world as it affects both physical and mental health, economy, and social life on all continents. In particular, Prof. Wasserman explains that *“worrying about the uncertain future and unemployment are only some aspects that impact mental well-being during and after the pandemic and that may lead to an increase in suicide rates”*. *“Suicide is an unnecessary death, it can be prevented”, she states, “while there is evidence available which strongly suggest that suicide can be prevented, these strategies may be affected during a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic and adjustments are required.”*

Suicide can be prevented also through increased knowledge, education and awareness around suicidal behaviours and risk factors. EPA Executive Director, Margaret Walker, adds *“as part of its commitment to lifelong learning for healthcare professionals working in mental health, EPA has developed, and continues to develop, online training activities via its dedicated e-learning platform. These activities foster the development of professional excellence and are of particular importance in these challenging times, when healthcare professionals may have difficulty in accessing traditional learning channels”*. Additionally, EPA has published a list of relevant COVID-19 related resources which aim to educate and raise awareness of the impact COVID-19 has on mental health in general, and on depression in particular, as a key leading cause of suicide in Europe.



Notes for editors:

1. The **World Suicide Prevention Day (WSPD)** is an awareness day observed on 10 September every year, in order to provide worldwide commitment and action to prevent suicides, with various activities around the world since 2003. The WSPD is organized by the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) under the motto “Working Together to Prevent Suicide”. More on the WSPD 2020 [here](#).
2. The **European Psychiatric Association (EPA)**: with active individual members in as many as 88 countries and 44 National Psychiatric Association Members that represent more than 80,000 European psychiatrists, the EPA is the main association representing psychiatry in Europe. The EPA deals with psychiatry and its related disciplines and focuses on the improvement of care for the mentally ill as well as on the development of professional excellence.

Useful links:

EPA website www.europsy.net

EPA e-learning platform: <https://elearning.europsy.net/>

EPA COVID-19 Resource Centre: <https://www.europsy.net/covid-19-resource-centre/>

3. This communication is based on the **report published by Prof. Danuta Wasserman** “Suicide Prevention During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic Evidence-Based Recommendations 2020” (June 2020). The full article can be found [here](#).
4. **For more information:** Mari Fresu mari.fresu@europsy.net