

EU ELECTIONS MANIFESTO

EUROPEAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION (EPA)

Mental Health is high on the agenda of all European Citizens and their families. Policy makers, together with scientific and clinical professionals, have a pressing responsibility to take on these challenges in close dialogue and co-creation with healthcare service users and their families.

Every European citizen has the right not only to timely and good quality mental healthcare if needed, but, importantly, to be supported throughout his or her lifetime with adequate (public mental health) measures that help prevent the development of mental disorders and improve and promote healthy quality of life.

Action is needed with a concerted and much increased focus on enlarging our resources in research and policy efforts aimed towards prevention and the development of strategies to underpin a society which promotes mental health and wellbeing.

The upcoming EU Elections on 6-9 June 2024 bring an opportunity to reflect on the results achieved so far and further work together towards better mental health care.

Information on the EPA

With active individual members in as many as 88 countries and 44 National Psychiatric Association Members who represent more than 78,000 European psychiatrists, the European Psychiatric Association 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.

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Background information

An analysis of hundreds of epidemiological studies in the EU (1990-2010) of a wide range of mental and neurological disorders with „best-estimates“ for their 12-month prevalence determined that at least 164.8 million of the total 510 million EU population have been suffering from one or more disorders of the brain (mental and neurologic disorders combined) in the past year. (Wittchen et al. 2011).

The disability burden of mental and neurological disorders combined in the EU is immense and much greater as compared to other regions of the world: In terms of DALY it was estimated that they account for 26,6% of the total, all cause, DALY burden (30.1% in females 23.4% in males) and 42% of all diseases in terms of Years Lived with Disability (YLD). The major proportion (60-70%) of the DALY burden of “disorders of the brain” in this study was attributed to mental disorders.

The study found no evidence for increasing or decreasing rates of mental disorders overall, when the same diagnoses are considered in 2005 with an overall prevalence of 27.4% compared to 27,1% in 2011. Cross-sectionally many cases with a mental disorder have more than one disorder - rates of comorbidity increase by age. Only 14-36% (depending on country) of all mental disorders are in contact with professional health care service because of their condition. Only half of them receive minimally adequate treatment (highest for psychotic and eating disorders; 72%, 61%). As opposed to high direct treatment costs for several neurological disorders, mental disorders cause high indirect costs (for example work loss) which can be directly linked to deficient treatment provision in the EU as only a minority of all 12-month cases receive treatment.

A more recent analysis of the DALY burden based exclusively on data from Global Burden of Disease study (GBD; Deuschl et al. 2022) used a substantially restricted set of diagnoses of mental

disorders, a more comprehensive set of neurologic disorders, and different definitions for the EU. This study suggests a substantially higher proportion for the burden. There is a need to reanalyse these studies in order to better explain the differences between the data (Wittchen et al. 2011; Deuschl et al. 2022) and to examine whether there have been substantial changes or increases in the prevalence and disability burden of disorders of the brain.

In addition to the impacts of mental disorders over the past years, the close relation between physical/somatic (e.g. COVID-19) and mental health has been further explored, with additional developments and a growing need for mental health care.

Psychiatry and broader mental health care are a fast-growing professional field. Psychiatric treatments increasingly prove to be as effective as those for other medical conditions. Treatment strategies and care have been completely revolutionized, with the emphasis now being placed on outpatient care in the community, from early detection to rehabilitation, and it is clear that many strategies for preventing psychiatric illnesses are within our grasp.

There has been an unprecedented boom in psychiatric research based on advances in the neurosciences, and advances in understanding the mechanisms and causes are multiplying and accelerating thanks to neuroimaging and genomics in particular. Technological advances are going hand in hand with the ever-growing concern for a more humane form of medicine, which should place psychiatry at the forefront of the contribution it makes to mental health.

The above shows the clear need for stronger actions to improve mental health care and prevention.

Priorities for 2024-2029

The European Psychiatric Association (EPA) has identified the following priorities for the upcoming EU Elections and calls on Members of the EU Parliament to:



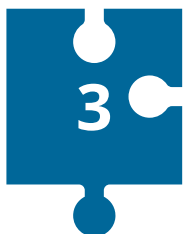
Harmonize mental health care delivery

- Harmonizing psychiatric care delivery and standards of mental health care in Europe.
- Harmonizing European training standards for the medical specialty of Psychiatry.
- Improving training for mental healthcare professionals and non-mental healthcare professionals.
- Promoting the exchange of good practices across countries.



Improve working conditions and address shortages of the Mental health workforce

- Addressing staffing issues in the mental health workforce.
- Improving and harmonizing the working conditions of the mental health workforce.
- Exploring new models of work, including changes in roles and multidisciplinary.
- Encouraging exchange/collaboration among healthcare professionals.



Promote and harmonize ethical standards

- Developing shared European standards on the Ethical and Human Rights aspects of mental healthcare delivery and prevention.
- Promoting national campaigns of destigmatization, improving the narrative and representation of mental diseases and care, and promoting access to psychiatric care.





Develop new answers to an evolving World

- Exploring the challenges and leveraging the opportunities of digitalization and AI.
- Addressing the challenges related to climate change, urbanization, and migration and their effect on mental health, specifically in young people.
- Rebuilding mental healthcare in Ukraine and improving responsiveness in health and mental health care systems (sharing Preparedness Plans).



Promote research and implementation of public mental health and prevention measures

- Allocating adequate resources to research in psychiatry, public mental health, and prevention strategies.
- Facilitating equal access to, and development of, (novel) pharmacological and biological treatments in mental healthcare, in line with the principles developed in the proposal adopted by the EU Commission in April 2023 for a new Directive and a new Regulation which revise and replace the existing general pharmaceutical legislation.
- Promoting a comprehensive approach towards mental health and brain health through research and all health in all policies strategies.

The European Psychiatric Association (EPA) will wholeheartedly engage with, and support, these priorities and action points. For the upcoming EU mandate period, 2024-2029, we warmly invite all interested European policy makers and stakeholders to join in these actions.

