

# **Progressive Manifesto on European Mental Health**

## **Agenda 2024-2029**

As representatives of the diverse European progressive community, standing at the threshold of a new era, we recognize the enduring mental health crisis gripping our continent, compelling us to intensify our endeavours and enact tangible improvement over the next five years. With the recognition of the toll the mental health issues and challenges exact upon individuals, families, communities, and our whole societies, we commend the strides made thus far in elevating the mental health agenda within the European Union. We welcome the European Commission's Communication on the Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health which was published on the 7th of June 2023 and also the European Parliament's report on Mental Health which was adopted on the 12th of December 2023. However, the urgency of our times necessitates a bolder, more comprehensive approach to tackling these pressing issues. Amidst the backdrop of ongoing crises, including the enduring impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the conflict in Ukraine, energy instability, and inflation, the imperative for a robust and ambitious mental health strategy is more pronounced than ever.

### **State of Play**

The prevailing state of mental health within Europe is one marked by multifaceted challenges, spanning socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental dimensions. Despite incremental progress, the pervasive stigma surrounding mental health issues persists. Access to vital support systems and services is still not sufficient for the real needs of people suffering from mental ill-health and for the overall benefit of our societies. Most vulnerable groups, including children, adolescents, and the elderly, bear a disproportionate burden, exacerbated by systemic inequities and disparities in access to care. Marginalized social groups, especially the people facing poverty and social exclusion, are struggling to access high quality support, both in terms of prevention, treatment, and post-recovery assistance. Moreover, the burgeoning influence of the digital realm, and other technological changes, has introduced unprecedented complexities, shaping new paradigms of mental health and necessitating adaptive strategies to safeguard well-being in the digital era.

### **Agenda for 2024-2029**

In advocating for a proactive stance on mental health, we implore the European institutions to prioritize mental health considerations and champion a strong European Mental Health Strategy. We call on all stakeholders to support the Mental Health Agenda for 2024-2029 that delineates key priorities, underpinned by a commitment to inclusivity, innovation, and social justice:

## I. Mental Health and Well-being in the Workplace

Recognizing the pivotal role of the workplace environment in shaping mental health outcomes, we advocate for the implementation of comprehensive workplace well-being initiatives. We advocate for fostering supportive work cultures, promoting work-life balance, and bolstering mental health literacy among employers and employees alike. By cultivating psychologically safe and inclusive workplaces, we endeavour to mitigate stressors, enhance resilience, and foster thriving organizational climates conducive to holistic well-being. We advocate to include mental health in ESG reporting. We also call on the EU and Member States to assist employers in introducing comprehensive mental health and well-being support through training, the exchange of best practices, the introduction of personalized mental well-being benefits, and other instruments.

## II. Mental Health in the Digital Era

Embracing the transformative potential of digital technologies, we advocate for the development of evidence-based interventions tailored to the digital landscape. We advocate for leveraging digital platforms for mental health promotion, applying new tools for prevention, and enhancing access to tele-mental health services. At the same time, we reiterate that the European Union needs to address the risks of digital technologies for our mental health, especially safeguarding digital spaces against cyberbullying and online harassment, protecting privacy, and preventing social isolation. Upholding principles of data privacy and ethical use of technology, we strive to harness digital innovations as catalysts for equitable mental health care delivery and community empowerment.

## III. Mental Health of Vulnerable Groups

Acknowledging the intersecting vulnerabilities faced by vulnerable populations, we prioritize targeted interventions to address the unique needs of children, adolescents, and the elderly. We call on the EU and the Member States to tailor mental health programs such as regular mental health classes at school or mental health counsellors at school that reflect the specific needs and conditions of marginalized and socially excluded individuals and communities. This entails fostering early intervention and prevention programs in educational settings, bolstering support networks for at-risk youth, and enhancing geriatric mental health services to promote dignified ageing. By dismantling barriers to care and amplifying voices of marginalized communities, we endeavour to forge a society where access to mental health services is a universal right, not a privilege.

## IV. Addressing the Link Between Mental Health and Addictions

Confronting the pervasive nexus between mental health disorders and substance, both legal and illegal, use, we advocate for integrated approaches to addiction prevention, treatment, and harm reduction on the one hand and mental health care on the other hand. This necessitates expanding access to evidence-based interventions, fostering collaboration between mental health and addiction services, and destigmatizing seeking help for co-occurring disorders. By adopting a harm reduction framework and promoting holistic recovery pathways, we endeavour to break the cycle of addiction and cultivate resilient communities anchored in compassion and support.

#### V. Reintegration After Recovery

Recognizing the journey of recovery as a continuum, we underscore the importance of reintegration support for individuals navigating mental health challenges. This entails fostering community-based rehabilitation programs, facilitating peer support networks, and promoting inclusive policies to mitigate social exclusion. By championing recovery-oriented approaches that prioritize individual autonomy and social connectedness, we aspire to cultivate a society where every person is allowed to thrive beyond the confines of mental illness.

#### VI. Increased EU Funding to Advance Mental Health and Well-being

It is imperative to underscore the necessity of increased funding at the EU level as a pivotal instrument in realizing key objectives of future EU mental health strategy. Enhanced financial support would enable the implementation of comprehensive workplace well-being initiatives, and encourage employers to prioritize the integration of mental health into their human resources strategies, workplace policies, and overall organizational framework focused on fostering supportive work cultures. It is also crucial in promoting mental health literacy and destigmatization of mental health issues in society. We are also convinced that the EU funding should facilitate the inclusion of mental health in ESG reporting. Moreover, heightened funding could bolster the development of evidence-based interventions tailored to the digital landscape, ensuring access to tele-mental health services while addressing the risks associated with digital technologies. We firmly believe that EU funding and mental health programs must be specifically tailored to address the unique needs of the most vulnerable groups in our society. This includes enhancing access to prevention programs, support services, treatment options, and post-recovery programs. We emphasize the urgent need for more EU funding to advance mental health and well-being across all sectors and communities.

We, the European Progressives, embark on the next chapter of our collective journey, we stand resolute in our commitment to advancing mental health as a cornerstone of European

solidarity, welfare, and prosperity. Through concerted action, guided by the principles of equity, compassion, and resilience, we affirm our unwavering resolve to build a future where mental health flourishes as a fundamental human right, enshrined in the fabric of our shared European identity.