



Impact of COVID19 on mental health and mental health services across Europe

Emergenza COVID: fase II e III. Salute psico-sociale nelle organizzazioni socio-sanitarie

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WHO WE ARE



European network organisation committed to:

- the **promotion** of positive mental health,
- the **prevention** of mental distress,
- the **improvement of care**, advocacy for **social inclusion** and the **protection of the rights** of (ex)users of mental health services, persons with psychosocial disabilities, their families and carers,
- The **end** of mental health **stigma**.



30

years of advocacy



73

member organisations



30

different countries



5

Strategic priorities

OUR WORK

- We work closely with the **European Institutions and international bodies**
- Together with our members, **we formulate recommendations for policy makers** to develop mental health friendly policies
- MHE places **users of mental services** at the centre of its work
- We are careful in preserving our **independence** from industrial interests





IMMEDIATE NEEDS 1: ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AND SUPPORT

- Stimulate online **psychosocial and peer support**
- Plan for increased demand in mental health services
- Invest in **community-based health services**
- Ensure access to **domestic violence support**
- **Rethink priorities** of the EU health agenda

**TOGETHER
WE CAN
MAKE IT**

IMMEDIATE NEEDS 2: PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS

- Reverse the reduction of rights immediately
- Promote basic social rights
- Adopt comprehensive long-term strategies involving persons with psychosocial disabilities

**TOGETHER
WE CAN
SUPPORT
EACH OTHER**

IMMEDIATE NEEDS 3: PUBLIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES

- **Acknowledge** publicly the additional stresses
- Launch prevention public health campaigns
- Share **good practices** across Europe
- Invest in mental health literacy
- Provide **accurate and clear information** in an accessible format

THE AFTERMATH: LONG-TERM CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Impact of **socio-economic factors** on mental health
- Access to mental health **support and services** – how COVID-19 can reshape our approach
- For more info, see our Position Paper on *Key long-term challenges and opportunities for mental health in the aftermath of COVID-19*:

https://www.mhe-sme.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/MHE-COVID-19-position-paper_062020.pdf

1. Introduction

COVID-19 has hit the world in an unprecedented way. Its effects will be with us for a significant period of time. As countries are slowly entering into the recovery phase of the pandemic, the long-term socio-economic implications, and how to address them, will become the key to success or failure for our societies.

It is a crucial moment for policy-makers to act wisely.

While there are, inevitably, different individual reactions to COVID-19, the pandemic and the national responses to it highlighted the intersection between our mental health and a range of social determinants such as where and how we live, work and age.

This paper aims to explore the key challenges and opportunities for mental health in the aftermath of COVID-19. It also shows how COVID-19 offers an opportunity to rethink our approach to mental health and implement structural changes in mental health support.

2. The impact of socio-economic factors on mental health

Our mental health is heavily determined by a variety of factors ranging from the quality of our relationships to employment, education, but also access to food, income and housing.

The impact of COVID-19 is hitting some communities harder than others. It exacerbates existing inequalities and worsens the position of those who were already facing social and economic difficulties such as people experiencing homelessness, migrants, people living in deprived areas.

These social inequalities constitute some of the main risk factors leading to mental ill health.

To address the wide-ranging determinants of mental health, cross-sectoral collaboration is key.

COVID-19 has shown some positive cultural changes where different services, including healthcare services, social care services, police and other organisations in voluntary sectors, started working closely and collectively on the principle of mutual aid. Such changes need to be scaled up.

In addition, policy-makers need to ensure that progress in supporting community living schemes and social support for people experiencing mental ill health is maintained. Investments in economic protection packages and the promotion of basic social rights are crucial for the promotion of positive mental health.

3. Access to mental health support and services: COVID-19 can reshape our approach

Community based support and services have shown great flexibility in adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic by quickly reorienting themselves. Unlike long-term institutions, these services were able to keep on supporting recovery in line with human rights and maintain higher levels of both sanitary and dignity standards.

The current pandemic and the general overreliance on biomedical interventions bring a real risk of over-prescription of medication as a first response. It is then highly likely to see increasing commercial influence and pathologisation of mental ill health.

There is a need to move beyond urgent driven medical solutions and instead adopt a public health and human rights approach to mental health.

Integrated community services can be the solution.



#TogetherWeCan

NOW IS THE TIME TO ACT: EUROPEAN INSTRUMENTS

- ✓ EU Funds:
 - EU4health
 - Recovery package
 - What of ESF+
- ✓ COVID19 mental health support group on HPP – led by MHE
- ✓ Mental Health Action Plan



USEFUL LINKS & RESOURCES

- MHE's page on COVID19: <https://www.mhe-sme.org/what-we-do/covid-19-and-mental-health/>
- MHE's Policy Recommendations on COVID19: https://www.mhe-sme.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/MHE-COVID-19-policy-recommendations_04052020.pdf
- MHE's Position Paper on Key long-term challenges and opportunities for mental health in the aftermath of COVID-19: https://www.mhe-sme.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/MHE-COVID-19-position-paper_062020.pdf



For more information:

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