

“Workshop On Leadership and Service Transformation in Mental Health: Creating Synergies Between EU Joint Action ImpleMENTAL and the Pan-European Mental Health Coalition” was successfully organised 22–23 May, in Brussels, in partnership with WHO/Europe



On 22–23 May, WHO/Europe convened a workshop in Brussels, Belgium, under the pan-European Mental Health Coalition in partnership with the European Union’s Joint Action on Implementation of Best Practices in the Area of Mental Health (JA ImpleMENTAL). This event focused on enhancing leadership and services in mental health.

The workshop aimed to facilitate sustainable transformation in mental health services, making them more accessible and inclusive across all stages of life. It gathered a diverse group of stakeholders, including country delegates, organization representatives, and people with lived experience of mental health conditions affiliated with the pan-European Mental Health Coalition and JA ImpleMENTAL.

On the 22nd of May 2024, in Brussels, Belgium, the “Workshop On Leadership and Service Transformation in Mental Health: Creating Synergies Between EU Joint Action ImpleMENTAL and the Pan-European Mental Health Coalition” started with the opening and welcoming words from the WHO Regional Director for Europe Hans Kluge, Belgium Minister of Social Affairs Frank Vanderbrouck who pointed out “a person suffering from a mental illness can not recover in the hospital”. Next were the DG Sante adviser for stakeholder relations Stefan Schreck and finally the Director of the Division of Country Health Policies and Systems WHO Regional Office for Europe, Natasha Azzopardi Muscat.

The opening words were moderated by the WHO Regional Advisor Ms Ledia Lazeri. The official program continued with the first session which has a goal of addressing stigma and discrimination in mental health. An overview of the project and country case studies on the implementation of best practices that are part of the JA ImpleMENTAL is part of this workshop.

The second day of the Workshop started with messages on the cost-benefit analysis and the importance of maximizing investments in mental health. Mapping the workforce in mental health presents the base of a sustainable pyramid of formal mental health care. Addressing the specific needs of groups of people suffering from mental disorders, like youth and the elderly should be integrated into the programs of care. Adequate support of the transition process from child and adolescent mental services towards mental services for adults is necessary for the continuity of care. Resilience centers for addressing trauma are important parts of countries' systems like those in Israel. Supported employment transition (while coming back from sick leave or regarding the period between two jobs) should be implemented in policy changes. An indispensable part of ensuring a good mental health system is taking into account the resources of primary health care.

The concluding words of the workshop were said by the JA ImpleMENTAL Coordinator, Ms. Vasileia Konte who emphasized the importance of the cooperation of all partners and thanked everyone who participated in the organization of the workshop; WHO Regional Advisor Ms. Ledia Lazeri, who emphasized that learning from each other is the most important part and thanked her team and Mr. Margetidis Georgios, Head of Section for EU4Health programme from HADEA, who addressed that mental health is an important part of public health and that synergy of efforts is the key.

About JA Implemental:

The Joint Action involves 39 participating organisations from competent authorities in 21 EU/EEA countries and supports them to establish local networks for mental health and to strengthen community-based provision of preventive care services across sectors in order to improve access to a sustainable quality of care. JA ImpleMENTAL is focusing on the transfer and implementation of two best practices:

(1) mental health reform in Belgium based on the principle of deinstitutionalization, the transition from primarily institutional care to community-based care in order to improve mental health outcomes and quality of life and avoid unnecessary hospitalizations, and

(2) Suicide Prevention Austria (SUPRA), a multi-level suicide prevention strategy that integrates universal, selective and indicated prevention interventions, based on the local implementation context and building upon existing resources and initiatives. The activities of the JA ImpleMENTAL strongly support the new Communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health, which aims to put mental health on par with physical health and to ensure a cross-sectorial approach to mental health issues.

JA ImpleMENTAL is committed to improve the quality of life of people living with mental problems and illnesses with the involvement of all parties concerned.

For further information on JA ImpleMENTAL project: <https://ja-implimental.eu/>

JA ImpleMENTAL is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed in the article are however those of the author(s) only, and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HADEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.