



European Commission - Speech [Check Against Delivery]



Speech by Commissioner Stella Kyriakides at the "Co-creating mental health: shaping Europe's future together" Event

Brussels, 13 May 2024

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues, friends

I am delighted to open today's discussions.

European Mental Health Week provides an important platform to talk about mental health.

Physical and mental health are equally important components of our health.

We know that too many people in the EU struggle with mental health challenges.

Nearly half of Europeans have experienced depression or anxiety.

In young people, suicide remains the second leading cause of death.

For us all, the past few years have not been easy.

The pandemic, rising living costs, geopolitical tensions – alongside the climate crisis and digital pressures – these all put a strain on people's mental health.

Young people, the elderly and vulnerable people are more affected than others.

This is why policies that help safeguard mental wellbeing are so important.

People deserve adequate and effective prevention.

They deserve access to high quality and affordable mental healthcare and treatment.

And those recovering from mental health issues need to be able to reintegrate into society – to get back to school, university or work - to life.

These are the guiding principles for Europe's first comprehensive approach to mental health, which we adopted last summer.

It is a pillar of the European Health Union.

And it has opened a new chapter in our work on mental health.

It looks beyond health policy and brings in other key areas, from employment and education to digitalisation and research.

We are supporting Member States as they strengthen and reform their mental health systems, together with the World Health Organization.

This is called the European Mental Health Capacity Building initiative, and it is supported by 11 million euros in funding.

Each country has different needs, challenges and opportunities.

To shed more light on this, a report on '*Mental Health Systems capacity in the EU*' will be published.

We're also building capacity and supporting knowledge exchange through the recent EU PROMENS programme.

It has 30 participating countries and an investment of 9 million euros.

I am pleased that at this difficult time, Ukraine will also benefit from this investment in capacity-building.

We have the EU Best Practices Portal, which includes a new repository of best and promising practices on mental health to support EU countries as they address challenges.

We have launched an EU campaign on safe and healthy work in the digital age.

And we are implementing the Better Internet for Kids Knowledge Hub and the policy map self-assessment tool, to better protect children in the digital world.

Four projects are providing mental health support for displaced people from Ukraine.

These are just some examples of how we are delivering for mental health in Europe – and we will continue to deliver.

A new tracking framework will allow us to monitor progress and see how quickly Member States are delivering on these initiatives.

Children and young people in particular need our support.

The Children Health 360 – prevention toolkit will address the link between mental and physical health to better protect young people.

We will develop an EU guidance document on stigma and continue to raise awareness in the fight against stigma.

To be able to say it's ok not to be ok.

And we will continue to prioritise the mental health of young cancer survivors as part of our work to support cancer patients and their families.

Lastly, Member States can avail of technical support to help make their health, social and education systems better able to deal with mental health issues.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Collective action is only possible when all actors are engaged.

Here, national authorities, regional actors, civil society organisations, people with lived experience and citizens themselves are all key players.

My huge appreciation goes to Mental Health Europe for your work bringing them together.

This is what co-creation is all about, and co-creation is a key part of our approach to mental health.

Promoting equality, respect and inclusiveness in mental health policies.

Raising awareness and tackling stigma and discrimination across the board.

Friends,

European Mental Health Week helps shine a light on mental health.

We cannot afford to waste any time.