



European Union

Statement

WHO

158th session of the Executive Board

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Item 7 – Mental health

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Item 7: Mental health

EU Statement

Chair,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union and its 27 Member States.

The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova* and Georgia as well as Armenia align themselves with this statement.

The European Union welcomes the DG's report addressing mental health under a dedicated agenda item for the first time. The scale of the mental health challenge deserves significant attention, with more than 1 billion people living with mental health condition and a considerable burden of premature deaths.

Mainstreaming mental health across WHO's work remains essential, as well as highlighting its close linkages with other non-communicable diseases and their major risk factors. This includes the co-occurrence of mental health and drug use disorders, an important issue for the EU as illustrated in its 2023 Council Conclusions.

We welcome WHO's guidance to help transform mental health systems and to integrate mental health, brain health and substance use into primary care. We also welcome efforts to stimulate the integration of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in emergency preparedness, response and recovery efforts, and encourage all Member States to act upon the WHA77.3 Resolution.

Yet, dedicated financial and human resources remain insufficient, both in stable and in emergency settings.

We further stress the need to ensure the full respect, protection and fulfilment of the human rights of persons living with severe mental health conditions.

The EU is particularly concerned by the high levels of mental health problems among children and young people. We commend the collaborative work undertaken with UNICEF to foster efforts and synergies.

A whole-of-government, whole-of-society response is essential to address the full range of determinants of mental health. As such, we appreciate that mental health is central to the Fourth UN High-Level Meeting political declaration. We encourage WHO to further develop a new

* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

package of policy options of cost-effective, evidence-based, and up-to-date interventions to promote and protect mental health, as appropriate.

Chair,

Digital technologies, including social media and AI-enabled applications, can have adverse health effects or amplify existing harms by contributing to unhealthy lifestyles and disseminating harmful content such as violence and damaging social norms. This can lead to unhealthy behaviors, screen addiction, gambling, cyberbullying, self-harm, and in the most severe cases, suicide.

We must address these mental and physical health risks, including by updating regulatory and educational systems, to ensure that in particular children and adolescents rights, health and well-being are fulfilled. In particular, children should be protected from aggressive online marketing of unhealthy food and drinks, alcohol, tobacco and similar products, or prohibited substances.

We call upon WHO to advance research and develop effective guidance that help countries to protect and promote mental health online and offline, while also recognizing the responsibility of digital platforms and industries.

Thank you.