



# **European Union**

## **Statement**

**WHO**

**78<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly**

**(19 May – 27 May 2025)**

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**Item 13.2 – Mental Health and Social Connection**

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**Geneva, 23 May 2025**

**WHO**  
**78<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly**

**Item 2: General Debate**

**EU Statement**

Chair,  
Director General,  
Excellencies,  
Colleagues,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the EU and its 27 Member States.

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

Mental health is a vital, interdependent dimension of human well-being. Yet, social connection – essential for health – has long been overlooked as a public health priority. The European Union welcomes the DG's report and strongly supports its call to tackle loneliness and social isolation as key health determinants.

The evidence is clear: loneliness and social isolation increases the risk of mortality, mental health conditions, dementia, and chronic diseases. It affects education outcomes, workplace productivity, and societal resilience. These challenges were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and are further shaped

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

by demographic, technological, economic and social changes, as well as health emergencies. Action is urgent.

Developing shared and collaborative approaches to promoting mental health, tackling social isolation and addressing the social determinants of mental health are necessary. They are relevant to all areas of policy development and delivery, not just health services.

In 2023, the European Commission adapted a comprehensive approach to mental health as a cross-cutting priority. It is based on prevention, access to high-quality and affordable care, and post-recovery reintegration into society.

Social isolation and loneliness are widespread across all age groups but disproportionately impact adolescents, persons with disabilities, older persons, as well as persons in vulnerable situations.

Particular focus should be on protecting children and young people. While digital technologies offer opportunities for learning and connection, they can also expose them to risks. Cyberbullying, digital gender-based violence, inappropriate content, excessive screen time, social comparison, and unrealistic beauty standards have harmful consequences for their well-being such as negative self-esteem and damaging stereotypes. We welcome WHO's guidance and evidence-based recommendations in this area. We are committed to ensuring that digital transformation promotes, rather than undermines, the social and mental well-being of young generations.

We commend WHO's leadership in the area of mental health social connection and call for international cooperation on research, monitoring and evaluation to build a robust evidence base for effective policies and interventions. We encourage WHO guidance and capacity-building to embed social connection within health strategies, while promoting multisectoral action that incorporates health equity and gender equality, and strengthening monitoring systems with

disability, age and gender-specific indicators. The upcoming UN High Level Meeting on non-communicable diseases and mental health provides an opportunity to advance this work.

The EU stands ready to work with all partners to build more socially connected, resilient, and healthy societies.

Thank you.