



# AUSTRIAN PRESIDENCY SCORECARD (JULY - DECEMBER 2018)

## MENTAL HEALTH & HUMAN RIGHTS

In order to engage with and analyse the performance of the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU), [Mental Health Europe](#) has devised a scorecard system through which we evaluate each Presidency's commitment to and promotion of mental health according to how they performed on the following criteria:

- **Promotion of mental health and well-being,**
- **Commitment to the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities,**
- **The involvement and empowerment of users of mental health services.**

The Austrian Presidency followed up to the Bulgarian Presidency and took over the proposal for a Directive on work-life balance and the European Accessibility Act. Additionally, discussions on the 2021-2027 funding regulations kicked off with the Austrian Presidency. With these relevant files, we could have expected the end of 2018 to be an exciting time for mental health and the rights of people with psychosocial disabilities. However, the Austrian approach to lead the Presidency of the Council of the EU has been more focused on maintaining the status quo rather than steering social change. While the Presidency worked on some aspects relevant to the work of MHE, it should be noted that more could have been done to have a positive impact on the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities.

### SCALE OF APPRECIATION: HOW WAS THE WEATHER DURING THE AUSTRIAN PRESIDENCY?



GOOD



FAIR



AVERAGE



POOR

### PROMOTION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Triologue negotiations on the proposal for a Directive on work-life balance started under the Austrian Presidency. Unfortunately, a final agreement could not be reached due to the lack of compromise among the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. The file was handed over to the Romanian Presidency to reach a final agreement.

Discussions on the 2021-2027 funding regulations begun with the Austrian Presidency over the summer. Files were passed on to the Romanians as no common position was reached within the Council, in particular concerning the European Social Fund Plus, the European Regional Development Fund and the Common Provision Regulations.

The [European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-Based care \(EEG\)](#) attempted to organise a meeting with the Austrian Presidency to engage in the discussions on the next EU funding regulations. Regrettably, the meeting could not take place due to the Austrian Presidency's unavailability and busy schedule.

During the Austrian Presidency the [Council conclusions on the Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022](#) were adopted. MHE supports the initiative and is pleased to see that well-being is one of the priorities identified by the Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022.

## COMMITMENT TO THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH PSYCHOSOCIAL DISABILITIES



In September, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) organised the second Fundamental Rights Forum in partnership with the Austrian Presidency. The event brought together relevant stakeholders at European and national level to discuss the promotion and protection of human rights in Europe. One of the themes addressed was "[Putting the money where the mouth is: how EU funding can build inclusive communities](#)". The Forum was an ideal opportunity to discuss how EU funding can be better used to advance human rights, including the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities.

After three years of negotiations, a provisional agreement on the European Accessibility Act was reached in November under the Austrian Presidency. While welcoming the efforts to reach an agreement, MHE regrets to see that the Accessibility Act was watered down to only cover digital accessibility, while excluding transport, microenterprises that provide services, household appliances, and any obligation on accessible buildings and infrastructure. This will mean that persons with psychosocial disabilities will continue facing accessibility barriers in many areas of life.

Finally, ten years after the Equal Treatment Directive was proposed, no progress was made on this file. Some EU Member States keep blocking progress on the proposal, which, if adopted, would allow closing legislative gaps against discrimination on all grounds. As with other Presidencies, the Austrian Presidency participated and spoke at the Disability High Level Group as well as at the European Day of Persons with Disabilities.

## INVOLVEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT OF USERS OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES



In September, the Presidency organised a conference on [Matching health needs and pharmaceutical research - How to set the research agenda for public health](#). The event discussed funding for innovation in pharmaceutical research and approval procedures for new drugs. Unfortunately the involvement of users of mental health services was poor in the discussions and their conclusions.

The [annual European Health Forum Gastein](#) (EHFG) took place in October under the Austrian Presidency and brought together key actors to discuss how to reach the Sustainable Development Goals targets, safeguard health and advance sustainable development. MHE is pleased to see that mental health has been included in the discussions as a key element to achieve the 2030 targets.

## CONCLUSION

The key three priorities for the Austrian Presidency were: security and the fight against illegal migration, securing prosperity and competitiveness through digitalisation, and the stability in the European neighbourhood. Unfortunately, no priority included mental health and well-being, nor were these topics mainstreamed in the activities undertaken by the Austrian Presidency.

As recent data show, more than one in six people across EU countries has a mental health problem. This amounts to 17.3%, namely 84 million, of the population in the EU. Member States need to commit to tackle the challenges that mental health issues raise for our citizens and societies. We hope that future Presidencies will show a greater commitment to promoting mental health and well-being, empowering users of mental health services and advancing the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities, and that this new scorecard will help them evaluate their performance in these key areas.

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