M·H·E
Mental Health Europe

Mental health in all policies :

scoping review of national developments (2017-2019)

01 | **Introduction**

Building on the work of the European Union in the area of mental health, Mental Health Europe has conducted a scoping review of national developments in mental health policies since 2017.

The last activity report of the EU Compass for Action on Mental Health and Wellbeing[1] was published in 2018. It covers 2017 and assesses the state of play and progress made towards five key action areas highlighted by the Joint Action on Mental Health and Wellbeing[2]:

1. promoting mental health at the workplace
2. promoting of mental health in schools
3. promoting action against depression and suicide and implementation of e-health approaches
4. developing community-based and socially inclusive mental health care for people with severe mental disorders
5. promoting the integration of mental health in all policies.

In 2017, significant progress has been observed in these areas by means of national mental health strategies, promotion and prevention programmes, widening the scope of services and the development of mental health in all policies or integrated governance approach (MHiAP).

This report reflects our findings of a scoping review of national developments in policies related to mental health since 2017. It aims to inform EU policy initiatives by delivering up-to-date information on the state of play of mental health related policies in the EU.

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1   https://ec.europa.eu/health/non_communicable_diseases/mental_health/eu_compass_en
2   https://www.mentalhealthandwellbeing.eu/the-joint-action/

02 | **Methodology**

For this exercise, we assessed public sources of evidence, with a special attention to:

- Health Systems and Policy Monitor by The European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies[3]
- Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency – National Policies Platform[4]
- Country Health Profiles 2019 by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development[5]
- Websites of the national relevant Ministries.

Additionally, a short questionnaire was disseminated within Mental Health Europe membership (over 70 national organisations), EU Member States Permanent Representations (health attachés) and national stakeholders (Ministries of Health).

The assessment of recent developments and progress towards key areas highlighted in the European Framework for Action on Mental Health and Wellbeing has been then categorised. The developments have been clustered in seven main categories:

1. Mental health in all policies

2. Mental health related reforms

3. Social inclusion and social policies

4. Digital health

5. Healthcare coordination

6. National health plans and strategies

7. Mental health strategies

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3   The Health Systems and Policy Monitor

4   Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency's National Policy Platform

5   OECD/European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (2019), Country Health Profile 2019, State of Health in the EU

03 | **Key developments**

Since 2017, several Member States took important steps to improve or update their national legislation or policies related to mental health.

Austria

Following the general elections in October 2017, Austria has reassigned responsibilities of several Ministries, including the Federal Ministry of Health and the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection. As a result, a new governmental institution was formed – the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection – encompassing responsibilities for health and social policies in one body. Additionally, the 2017-2021 Federal Target-Based Governance Agreement includes a specific measure and an indicator on mental health services for children and adolescents. Austria also set up a platform to coordinate psychosocial support for vulnerable groups such as refugees. In 2017, a coordination centre was set up at the National Public Health Institute.[6]

Belgium

Currently, in Belgium there are 20 operational networks with 5 assigned functions each: prevention and promotion, ambulatory care, rehabilitation focusing on recovery and social inclusion, residential intensive care and housing. Additionally, in 2019 a new project was launched to increase accessibility to primary psychological health care. This reimbursed care aims to promote prevention, early detection and early intervention of mild to moderate psychological problems, to avoid evolution of these problems into chronic and complex psychiatric disorders.

Bulgaria

Some specific legislative undertakings were introduced in Bulgaria, where in December 2018 a new comprehensive law for people with disabilities was enacted. The Law on People with Disabilities intends to promote, protect and guarantee the full and equal enjoyment of the rights and freedoms of people with disabilities, create conditions for social inclusion, promote respect and provide support for both people with disabilities and their families. It covers the following areas: healthcare, education,

Recovery and enabling environment are the guiding principles of the new law.

6   Austria: Health system review 2018. Health Systems in Transition. World Health Organization

employment, housing, accessibility, transport, culture, sport, personal, social and political life, as well as justice. The new law regulates medical, social, professional and psychological rehabilitation and integration of people with disabilities. It introduces a new regulation to the labour market, which is a requirement of quotas when it comes to employment of people with disabilities. Recovery and enabling environment are the guiding principles of the law. [7]

Denmark

Three important initiatives were introduced in Denmark since 2017. First, a new Digital Health Strategy 2018-2020 that aims to enable all involved parties to better cooperate in the health system. The strategy recognises possibilities offered by using digital technologies in mental health in providing services for patients in their own home. It refers to positive experiences with digital support for psychological treatment, including mild anxiety. In October 2017, the Danish regions decided to roll out psychological treatment of anxiety and light to moderate depression as a two-year pilot project in Denmark.[8]

Second, the Danish government issued a strategy for general practice. The strategy tries to address a shortage of general practitioners (GPs) by handing more tasks to the supporting staff in order to free up more time for GPs. One example is delegation of mentoring, treatment and prevention of citizens mental health problems by trained nurses. Another aspect is scaling up the regional health facilities in order to employ more supporting staff, particularly focused on the management of

chronic diseases, but also on mental well-being and health, which can offer guidance and easier treatment to the increasing number of persons with mental health problems among children, adolescents and adults.[9]

Third, in September 2017 psychiatric care pathways were revised and are now being implemented by the regions.[10] The overall aim of this revision is to offer standardised high-quality care for patients with similar mental health problems.

> This step is an integral part of the Danish Government and Regions' ambition to improve the quality of psychiatric care and increase quality and life expectancy among psychiatric patients.

20 mental health care pathways have been produced for various mental health problems e.g. depression, OCD, trauma, schizophrenia. Pathways are adjustable to the individual needs or wishes and aim to promote non-pharmacological interventions and involvement of family and relatives.

Finally, in 2019 a new initiative was launched to create a national set of patient reported outcome measures for patients with mental health problems (such as depression and schizophrenia) and epilepsy for national use. It follows an action which started to be implemented in 2017 at the national level.[11]

7   Disabled People Act, https://www.lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2137189213
8   *A Coherent and Trustworthy Health Network for All: Digital Health Strategy 2018–2022*, Denmark http://www.sum.dk/Aktuelt/Publikationer/~/media/Filer%20-%20Publikationer_i_pdf/English/2018/A-coherent-and-trustworthy-health-network-for-all-jan-2108/A-coherent-and-trustworthy-health-network-jan-2018.pdf

9   Ibid
10   https://www.sundhed.dk/sundhedsfaglig/opslag-og-vaerktoejer/pakkeforloeb/psykiatripakker/
11   OECD/European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (2019), Denmark: Country Health Profile 2019, State of Health in the EU, OECD Publishing, Paris/European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, Brussels.

Estonia

In December 2017, the Parliament of Estonia (Riigikogu) approved stricter control regulations for tobacco and alcohol, especially related to advertising. These strengthened regulations are outlined in the Alcohol Act, Advertising Act and Tobacco Act. The overall goal of this action was to improve the public health outcomes and reduce serious health problems and addiction caused by tobacco and alcohol.[12]

Finland

Work on a national mental health strategy covering 2020-2030 started in 2018 in Finland. The strategy was released by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in February 2020.

The aim of the strategy is to promote mental health of the whole population with an emphasis on children and adolescents.

The strategy seeks to secure people's rights to mental health, incorporating them into existing structures, and to improve mental health services. The strategy addresses also suicide prevention. 10 million EUR were allocated for the implementation of the strategy.

Additionally, Finland has revised its legislation concerning mental health and substance abuse services.[13] Mental health is also promoted through other governmental projects such as a project to improve health and social services for families with children and a project to improve people's wellbeing at work.

France

A few significant developments related to mental health policy were observed in France, where a new national health strategy for 2018-2022 was introduced.[14] The strategy aims, among others, to address the growing burden of mental ill-health by improving the social environment and support for those on the lowest incomes. In addition, a roadmap for mental health was published by the Strategic Committee on Mental Health and Psychiatry.[15] It includes 37 actions in three areas such as: promotion of mental wellbeing, prevention and early identification, coordinated and supported care pathways, accessible and diversified services, improvement of living conditions, social inclusion and citizenship of people with psychosocial disabilities.

The roadmap focuses on early identification and management of mental health problems and suicide prevention.

Germany

In April 2019, Germany appointed a commission to work on proposals for an effective ban on conversion therapies. These therapies are psychological and spiritual practices aiming to change an individual's homosexual or bisexual psychosexual orientation. As sufficient evidence indicates the harmful effects that those therapies have on the mental health of LGBT people, the German Health Minister, Jens Spahn, publicly stated that homosexuality is not a disease and

12   *Estonian President proclaims amendments to Alcohol Act*, Nordan, https://nordan.org/estonian-president-proclaims-amendments-to-alcohol-act/
13   Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency's National Policy Platform

14   *National Health Strategy 2018-2022,* https://www.gouvernement.fr/sites/default/files/locale/piece-jointe/2018/10/france-national-health-strategy-2018-2022.pdf
15   *Roadmap: Mental Health and Psychiatry,* 2018 https://solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/180628_-_dossier_de_presse_-_comite_strategie_sante_mentale.pdf

does not require treatment.[16] If successful, Germany would follow suit of Malta, which has become the first European country to ban conversion therapies.

Greece

Following the deinstitutionalisation reforms in Greece, a new legislation was adopted in April 2019.[17] It establishes assisted living shelters for adult people with disabilities in order to support them in their daily life activities. The assisted living shelters improve quality of life, support participation and foster social integration. People with disabilities, including those with psychosocial disabilities, can stay closely connected to their communities and it enhances the rehabilitation process. Inhabitants of the shelters have access to healthcare, social support, trainings and employment.

At the core of this law is the principle of autonomy.

Hungary

A National Health Programme was adopted in Hungary in 2018. The government outlined its main health priorities in the field of cardiovascular, oncological and rheumatological diseases, as well as mental health and child health.[18]

Ireland

A ground-breaking legislation on alcohol was introduced in Ireland in 2018. For the first time ever, issues such as minimum unit price, restrictions on advertising, labelling etc. were addressed by state regulation.[19]

In the same year, Mental Health Reform (a publicly funded NGO), concluded an international project, in a partnership with other regional institutions, concerning digital mental health services. The final report discusses the state of eMental Health applications available in Ireland and internationally, effectiveness of the digital approach and presents possible solutions for improvements of mental health services in Ireland with the use of eMental Health.[20]

"Healthy Ireland 2013-2025" is a tool for action to improve the health and wellbeing of the people in Ireland.

Within the existing framework "Healthy Ireland 2013-2025", a government-led campaign was organised in 2019. A Healthy Ireland campaign was launched in April in 2019, with the goal of encouraging people to make healthy choices and support their mental wellbeing. A main website, hosted by the Irish government, contains a lot of information on healthy lifestyles, including on mental health and risk factors.[21]

16   *Kommission legt Anforderungen für ein wirksames Verbot von sogenannten Konversionstherapien vor*, https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/2019/2-quartal/kommission-verbot-konversionstherapien.html
17   The Health Systems and Policy Monitor
18   OECD/European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (2019), Hungary: Country Health Profile 2019, State of Health in the EU, OECD Publishing, Paris/European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, Brussels.

19   Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018, http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/act/24/section/2/enacted/en/html#sec2
20   *eMental Health State-of-the-art & Opportunities for Ireland*, https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/10604/86323b13d11048dd88790fb9059941d2.pdf#page=1
21   *Think well*, the Government of Ireland, 2019, https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/87151a-think-well/#mental-wellbeing

Apart from the campaign, the Healthy Ireland Outcomes Framework was launched. It incorporates health status, outcomes, determinants of health and wellbeing across the life course.[22]

Italy

A special Commission to monitor the implementation of the National Plan to tackle chronic conditions was established in Italy in January 2018.[23] The Commission is composed of the various stakeholders including the national Ministry of Health, healthcare professionals, patients and service users. The plan, for which the Commission is responsible, stems from the need to harmonise activities at national and regional level. It aims to align goals with available resources and create a common strategic agenda with all existing plans, including the one targeting mental health in Italy.

Latvia

In June 2019, the Latvian Cabinet of Ministers approved a plan to improve access to mental health care. The four main areas of focus are (1) prevention, early diagnosis and timely outpatient treatment, (2) patient-centred

The core of this action is providing citizens with evidence-based, modern, high-quality and responsive access to mental health care.

inpatient treatment and healthcare coordination, (3) mental health promotion and (4) human resources in psychiatry.

In order to reduce the number of hospitalisations, the plan introduces observational beds and additional support for the psychiatric in-patient services from multidisciplinary teams. The plan also aims to reduce stigma and raise awareness

Lithuania

Since 2017, Lithuania proposed strengthening the regulations of mental health services, reviewed the Lithuanian Health Strategy for 2014-2025 and increased the funding for mental health (through the financial mechanisms of the European Economic Area).

First, the Lithuanian Parliament approved a law preventing mental and behavioural problems to ensure equal access to quality and accessible mental health services for all people, and the rights of people with mental health problems.[24]

Second, in October 2019 the Parliament updated the Lithuanian Health Strategy.

The strategy focuses on creating a healthy environment, strengthening mental health, especially suicide prevention, and child health education.

It is planned to increase the availability of psychological and psychiatric care, as well as to expand the implementation of preventive measures for persons with mental health problems to reduce psychological burden and suicide risk factors.[25]

22   *Healthy Ireland Outcomes Framework*, the Government of Ireland, 2018, https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/67c407-healthy-ireland-outcomes-framework/

23   *Piano Nazionale della Cronicità*, http://www.trovanorme.salute.gov.it/norme/

24   *The Seimas will consider ways to improve the regulation of mental health care*, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania, http://sam.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/seimas-svarstys-kaip-tobulinti-psichikos-sveikatos-prieziuros-reglamentavima

25   *The Seimas approved the improved Lithuanian health strategy*, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania, http://sam.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/seimas-patvirtino-patobulinta-lietuvos-sveikatos-strategija

Finally, in line with the 2014-2021 EEA and Norway Grants financial mechanisms, Lithuania plans to allocate 9 million EUR to improve mental health of children, adolescents and families through adolescence-focussed mental, social and health care services and creation of a "wellbeing assistant". [26] As a result, the Ministry of Health started financing municipal Public Health Bureaus in 2019. Their role is to promote mental health prevention in schools with a goal of enhancing the competences of school workers in identifying and addressing mental health issues.[27]

Malta

Two major steps were recently taken in Malta, with the advancement of the Mental Health Strategy 2020-2030 and of transgender healthcare services.

First, the 2020-2030 Mental Health Strategy is built around 4 clusters, which are: promotion of mental health and wellbeing by addressing the wider determinants of health, transformation of the framework within which mental health service are delivered, support for all persons with mental health problems and their families, and finally building capacity and fostering innovation to improve performance of mental health service.[28]

> The Mental Health Strategy is based on the human rights approach to mental health.

Second, a government strategy on healthcare provisions for transgender people was adopted in 2018 aiming to tackle primarily the medical, psychological and social aspects of gender affirmation from the healthcare services perspective. As stated in the introduction the strategy pledges to leave no one behind, in line with the SDGs goals.[29]

Netherlands

In the Netherlands, The Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport has consulted with stakeholders from the mental health field to come up with a new National Suicide Prevention Agenda 2018-2021, as a follow-up to the earlier agenda.[30] The document takes the form of an official policy letter sent to the Parliament by the Minister of Health. The agenda addresses areas such as education, media, socio-economic factors, general practice and emergency services.

Norway

The Norwegian Council for Mental Health, a national umbrella organisation, has adopted a new strategy plan for 2017-2019 with six goals for this period: prevention, research, political influence, quality improvement, inclusion and participation.[31] Also, in 2018 the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority proposed to renew the inclusive workplace agreement signed with employers and employees, with a focus on mental health and substance abuse.

26   EEA Grants, https://eeagrants.org/countries/lithuania
27   OECD/European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (2019), Lithuania: Country Health Profile 2019, State of Health in the EU, OECD Publishing, Paris/European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, Brussels.
28   A Mental Health Strategy for Malta 2020-2030, https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/Documents/National-Health-Strategies/Mental_Health_Strategy_EN.pdf

29   Transgender Healthcare, https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/Documents/National-Health-Strategies/Transgender%20Healthcare.pdf
30   National suicide prevention agenda 2018-2021, https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/geestelijke-gezondheidszorg/documenten/brieven/2017/06/15/landelijke-agenda-suicidepreventie-2018-2021
31   https://psykiskhelse.no/

Among others, individual job support and facilitation treatment during employment will be offered within this initiative.[32]

Poland

In 2018, the Polish government announced a reform in the psychiatric system consisting of four main aspects: pilot of mental health community centres, increase in expenditure on treatment, changes in psychiatric and psychological care for children and youth, improvement of preventive measures.

> The reform aims to decrease institutionalisation and provide more community-based care to people with mental health problems.[33]

In 2019, the government appointed a plenipotentiary for the mental health reform, who is responsible for the coordination of all the stakeholders involved.

Slovenia

In March 2018 the National Assembly in Slovenia adopted the Resolution on a National Mental Health Programme 2018-2028. It is the first policy document adopted in Slovenia that focuses solely on mental health.

It is based on the Mental Health Act from 2008 and includes six priority areas: mental health promotion, prevention and de-stigmatization, network of services for mental health, suicide and alcohol-related problems prevention, as well as awareness, research and evaluation.[34]

The coordinating body is the National Institute of Public Health. Within the structure of the Programme, a governmental Mental Health Council is planned to be established. Its added value will be bringing together relevant ministries (health, labour, science and sport, finance, public administration, development and technology), representatives of the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy, representatives of service providers, users and their associations, mental health educational and research institutions, and representatives of local governments.

UK

At the beginning of 2019, the British government announced that it plans to increase spending on NHS in England as a whole by an extra 20 billion GBP over the next five years with an aim to improve waiting times and crisis support. Also, in England, the NHS will make bereavement support available to care for people after a relative or friend's suicide.[35]

> By 2023 and 2024 the aim is to implement similar support services in every region of the country.

32   *DKK 125 million for the inclusion day,* https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/125-millioner-kroner-til-inkluderingsdugnaden/id2613933/#individuell_jobbstotte_budsjett_2019

33   *Reforma opieki psychiatrycznej,* https://www.gov.pl/web/zdrowie/reforma-opieki-psychiatrycznej

34   Konec Juričič N, *The importance of the Resolution on the National Mental Health Programme 2018-2028 for Slovenia.* European Journal of Public Health, Volume 28; November 2018

35   *Suicide bereavement support to be made available across England,* https://www.gov.uk/government/news/suicide-bereavement-support-to-be-made-available-across-england

04 | Conclusions

The key developments undertaken by Member States since 2017 show that significant progress has been achieved in the key areas highlighted in the European Framework for Action on Mental Health and Wellbeing.

The developments can be clustered in seven main categories:

1. Mental health in all policies (Austria, Slovenia)
2. Mental health related reforms (Belgium, Poland, UK)
3. Social inclusion and social policies (Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Norway)
4. Digital health (Ireland, Denmark)
5. Healthcare coordination (Denmark, Latvia)
6. National health plans and strategies (France, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands).
7. Mental health strategies (Finland, Malta, Norway, Slovenia).

Despite visible progress and meaningful actions taken up by many Member States, a stronger commitment is necessary to better align developments and create synergies. Stronger coordination and increased exchanges of good practices can enhance adequate developments across the European Union and beyond.

We call the European Union to take up a stronger coordination and support role in strengthening mental health systems in Europe. We also call Member States to increasingly adopt mental health specific policies and strategies with the involvement of all stakeholders, including persons with lived experience.

Mental Health Europe

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