



**Brussels, 8 May 2020**

**To the Attention of**

President of the European Council Charles Michel

President of the European Commission Ursula Von der Leyen

**Copy:**

Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Stella Kyriakides

Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli

Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights Nicolas Schmit

***Honourable President of the European Council Charles Michel***

***Honourable President of the European Commission Ursula Von der Leyen,***

Marking the first European Mental Health Awareness Week, we, as Members of the European Parliament, would like to draw your attention to the necessity to rethink our approach to mental health and related investments in Europe. Be it at European or national level, the current coronavirus pandemic is making it clear that action must be taken now to address current and future needs related to mental health.

We cannot forget about people with mental health problems, now and in the aftermath of COVID-19. The consequences of the current outbreak disproportionately affect people who experience mental ill-health and expose the shortcomings of European mental healthcare systems. This is illustrated, for instance, by the increased risk of contagion, isolation and use of coercive measures in psychiatric institutions and by a risk of increased medicalisation of mental health problems.

The COVID-19 pandemic also relentlessly reminds us that mental health is strongly affected by a range of social determinants, including how we live, work and age. Isolation, unemployment, increased violence or long-lasting distress carry the risk to create further inequalities and lead to persisting mental health problems.

It is essential to think ahead and set in place now plans to mitigate the long-term consequences and challenges that will be caused by the ongoing pandemic. These will be substantial in many sectors affecting mental health, including but not limited to social policies and employment, education, access to services and housing.

The European Commission and national governments need to act now to ensure that the current public health crisis does not become a long-term social crisis and that we do not replicate ineffective patterns in our mental health and social systems.

As such, we call on the European leaders and the Member States to follow, in any recovery efforts, the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the European Pillar of Social Rights to ensure compliance with the human rights approach to mental health.

We also urge the EU institutions and Member States to revisit their investment tools and use of available resources in order to support those at the highest risk of exclusion and discrimination. As our mental health heavily depends on the environments we live in, social inclusion should become a priority in all policies, including social protection, employment, education, and housing policies.

Today, Europe needs not only more but wiser investments in mental health. With concerted cross-sectoral European action on mental health, we can turn the current COVID-19 crisis into an opportunity to improve the lives of European citizens and show what a truly cohesive Europe looks like.

Please find attached a set of concrete suggestions on how to address mental health and the needs of persons with psychosocial disabilities now and in the aftermath of COVID-19.

We thank you in advance for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

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