



CROATIAN PRESIDENCY SCORECARD

(JANUARY - JUNE 2020)

MENTAL HEALTH & HUMAN RIGHTS

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. The performance of each Presidency is rated based on the following criteria:

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

The Croatian Presidency has notably [prioritised](#) sustainable development, advancing employment policies and workers' rights. The focus on addressing challenges related to a rapidly changing labour market, wellbeing at work, access to employment for women and opportunities for young people have dominated the social agenda of the Presidency.

The first rotating Croatian Presidency had to face the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, which certainly had an impact on its planned priorities, activities, and outcomes. The coordination of the EU response to this crisis became an important element of the Presidency.

SCALE OF APPRECIATION: HOW WAS THE WEATHER DURING THE CROATIAN PRESIDENCY?



GOOD



FAIR



AVERAGE



POOR

PROMOTION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

In June the Council adopted its [Conclusions on Enhancing Wellbeing at Work](#). The Council invited the EU Member States to develop a cross-sectoral assessment of impacts on wellbeing at work to strengthen the available knowledge and inform policymaking, and to enforce existing legal frameworks related to wellbeing at work. The Council Conclusions also called on the Member States to proceed with the implementation of the [Work-Life Balance Directive](#) and to adopt the EU Strategic Framework on Occupational Safety and Health for the period 2021 – 2027. Finally, the Conclusions raised the need to include wellbeing at work horizontally into all national and EU relevant policies and to promote the European Pillar of Social Rights.

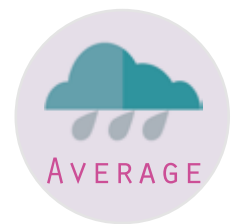


The EU ministers for social and employment affairs met in June to discuss how to make national employment and social policies more robust and labour markets more resilient to overcome the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Among others, Ministers stressed the need for upskilling and reskilling as ways to support economic recovery and social cohesion. This led to the adoption of [Council Conclusions on Reskilling and upskilling](#) >>>

>>> [as a basis for increasing sustainability and employability](#), and [Council Conclusions on demographic challenges](#). While addressing key social and health issues, both documents fail to explicitly recommend the promotion of mental health and wellbeing as a part of the recovery process to overcome the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the current demographic challenges.

The Croatian Presidency hosted two important meetings related to gender equality, namely the [EU Conference on Gender Equality: Participation of women on the labour market – Benefit for society](#) and [Advancement of Women, Advancement of the Economy. Realise your Potential](#) (hosted by the Croatian Women's Network). Regrettably, the latter did not involve the perspective of people with psychosocial disabilities. The EU Conference on Gender Identity raised the issues of a gender dimension in employment and gender roles impacting the care responsibilities and resulting in a lower representation of women on the labour market. It also discussed some specific aspects of accessing the labour market, such as the experience of women with disabilities. The conference was concluded with a set of recommendations focusing on more effective work-life balance policies, improvements in long-term services to tackle the care burden on women and recognition of unpaid work, all of which are key for the improvement of mental health.

COMMITMENT TO THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH PSYCHOSOCIAL DISABILITIES



The Presidency hosted the [EU Youth Conference on Opportunities for Rural Youth](#) in March 2020. One of the objectives of the conference was to focus on the aftermath of the global economic crisis that hit the youth the most and on the empowerment of young people to be actively involved in community life and contribute to social change. Later in May, the Council held an [Informal Videoconference of the EU Ministers of Youth](#), which was an opportunity to exchange between the Member States, the European Commission and the European Youth Forum. The meeting was concluded by stressing the importance of comprehensive cross-sectoral cooperation, as the pandemic has created many risks for youth, including a negative impact on their mental health, employment, potential violence and discrimination.

Despite mentioning that the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) would be high on the agenda of the Presidency, little has been done to promote the rights of people with psychosocial disabilities.

INVOLVEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT OF USERS OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES



While looking at events organised under the patronage of the Croatian Presidency, it is unclear to what extent users of mental health services have been involved in the design and organisation of these events. For example, the [High-Level Virtual Policy Summit “Post-COVID-19 Europe’s digital Health future - from sharing to empowering”](#) and the [international conference on outcomes-based healthcare](#).

CONCLUSION

The Croatian Presidency's motto was “A strong Europe in a world of challenges”. Undeniably, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a great challenge, not only for the Presidency but also for all Member States and citizens. A lot of attention and resources must have been redirected towards fighting the pandemic. The EU and its Member States will still have to face the long-term consequences of this crisis, including its negative impact on mental health.

While the Croatian Presidency during its term contributed significantly to the advancement of wellbeing in employment policies, a mental health dimension was missing in its long-term vision of a recovery process.

Generally, the Croatian Presidency was a missed opportunity to engage with users of mental health services and people with psychosocial disabilities. Even more so considering that they constitute one of the groups most hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.