GERMAN PRESIDENCY SCORECARD

(JULY-DECEMBER 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.**

LOOKING BACK – HIGH EXPECTATIONS, MIXED OUTCOMES

In many respects, the German EU Presidency was largely overshadowed by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, fittingly the Presidency's motto titled "Together for Europe's Recovery." At the same time, the German Presidency was met with great expectations, concluding the year with an agreement on the United Kingdoms` withdrawal from the European Union and the development and finalisation of EU's Multi-annual Financial Framework, including the EU Recovery Program (Next Generation EU), to be tied to a rule of law mechanism. In October, the first EU SURE social bonds were issued by the Commission for the first time in history. The Presidency further welcomed the New Pact on Asylum and Migration by the European Commission. The German Presidency also saw major agreements in formalising its climate ambitions, reaching 55% of carbon emission reduction by 2030 and a major European common agricultural policy reform. Finally, the Digital Services Act Package paves the way for a new setup in regulating digital services & platforms.

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

GOOD   FAIR   AVERAGE   POOR

PROMOTION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

FAIR

With the ambition to "build back better" following the Covid-19 pandemic, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen declared a "European Health Union" in her State of the Union address in September 2020. Before the end of its Presidency, the negotiations on the upcoming EU4Health Programme have reached a critical point. On 14 December, the European Parliament and the Council formulated a provisional agreement on the programme's final shape worth 5.1 billion EUR, as part of the EU's long-term budget (2021-2027). While little commitments were made to mental >>>

>>>   health in the process, the final document foresees mental health as a priority issue in the future. The EU4Health programme will boost the health sector during the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and contribute to building more resilient healthcare systems in Europe. Among other essential objectives agreed, a prominent place had been dedicated to mental health. The agreement ensures that the programme will address long-term public health issues such as improving mental health and reducing health inequalities.

Another positive development, pushed by the EU4Health Civil Society Alliance, of which MHE is a member, is the active participation of the third sector in implementing the Health Programme's framework. The final text of the programme includes a new article which establishes the obligation to consult NGOs in the context of the development of annual work programs and to present the results of these consultations to the European Parliament each year.

COMMITMENT TO THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH PSYCHOSOCIAL DISABILITIES

POOR

While the German Presidency showed formal commitment to the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), it remained mainly invisible throughout its term. Numerous examples show that persons with disabilities, including persons with psychosocial disabilities, are at heightened risk of being infected with Covid-19, yet the German Presidency did not pay sufficient attention to inclusive emergency policies. This includes a lack of reflection on institutionalisation and the pandemic's impact on persons living in institutions. When the outbreak hit peak numbers, and discussions emerged on triage, that is, the prioritisation of persons for intensive care, the German Presidency remained silent on human rights implications for triage politics.

On a policy level, the German Presidency failed to focus on the ongoing development of the EU Disability Rights Strategy 2021-2030. While it organised a conference on the occasion of the European Day of Persons with Disabilities in December 2020, it did not sufficiently take into account recommendations for the future strategy, such as the evaluation of the former Strategy 2010-2020. Participation at the High-Level-Group on Disability, a platform of exchange between the Commission and civil society, resulted in a general presentation of Germany's priorities, without mentioning the rights of persons with disabilities. A similar observation can be made with the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, which, despite being welcomed by the German Presidency, foresees the potential exacerbation of the rights of migrants with disabilities, including migrants with psychosocial disabilities.

INVOLVEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT OF USERS OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

POOR

Hampered by the pandemic throughout the second half of 2020, no conference or seminars were organised under the German Presidency that collaborated with users of mental health services. This includes a lack of communicating with users of mental health services in the development of EU4Health programme resolutions.

CONCLUSION

The Covid-19 pandemic certainly had severe implications for the objectives of the German Presidency in the second half of 2020. However, while it swiftly reacted in some related issues, for example, the European coordination of Covid-19 vaccine distribution, it did not adequately respond to the concerning findings of the pandemic on mental health and well-being. The prominent representation of mental health in the final EU4Health programme could be a silver lining moving towards "post-pandemic futures".

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