



## New WHO Guidance on community mental health services: A critical milestone for mental health reforms in Europe

**Mental Health Europe (MHE) welcomes the launch of the World Health Organization's (WHO) long-awaited guidance on community mental health services on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2021 and calls on European, national and local authorities to transform their mental health systems and services towards human-rights compliant care.**

Commenting on the release of WHO guidance and technical packages, Acting Director of Mental Health Europe Liuska Sanna said: *"This landmark guidance represents a critical milestone in supporting mental health reform across Europe. If we want to ensure that we build back better in the aftermath of COVID 19 and that our mental health systems respond to people's needs, we must scale up these innovative approaches to promote recovery, autonomy and inclusion"*.

Community-based services and supports that respect people's rights need to be developed and expanded: services that do not use coercion, promote holistic recovery approach and the right to legal capacity, informed consent, participation and community inclusion.

In addition, governments should implement strategies to end the use of coercive practices such as seclusion and restraint as well as any form of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. People's choices and decisions about their treatment, care and support must be respected. **Going forward, European, national and local governments should provide person-centered holistic care addressing all important areas of a person's life, including relationships, work, family, and education - rather than focusing solely on symptom reduction.**

### Background

The purpose of these WHO documents is to provide information and guidance to all stakeholders who wish to develop or transform their mental health system and services. The guidance provides in-depth information to develop good practice services that meet international human rights standards and obligations that promote a person-centred, recovery approach.

**It promotes the creation of mental health services that operate without coercion, that are responsive to people's needs, support recovery and promote autonomy and inclusion, and that involve people with lived experience in the development, delivery and monitoring of services.**

Through the emergence of the guidance, the WHO joins global efforts to human-rights compliant mental health services. In the past, Mental Health Europe published a report showing promising practices in prevention, reduction and elimination of coercion across Europe, a report on supported decision-making and a position paper on Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons

with Disabilities (legal capacity). Together with these, the WHO guidance should inspire policy makers, service providers & other key actors to take action to develop these services in their countries and scale up innovative approaches to mental health in Europe.

### **About Mental Health Europe**

Mental Health Europe (MHE) is the largest independent European network organisation working to promote positive mental health prevent mental health problems and advance the rights of people with mental ill-health or psychosocial disabilities. Learn more about MHE from [this video](#).

### **Contact**

For more information, please contact Jonas Bull, MHE Research & Policy Officer.

### **For more information:**

- [WHO guidance](#)
- [MHE Report: promising practices on the prevention, reduction and elimination of coercion across Europe](#)
- [MHE position paper: Position Paper on Article 12 of the UN CRPD – Legal Capacity](#)
- [MHE Report: Implementing supported decision-making. Developments across Europe and the role of National Human Rights Institutions](#)