



Slovenian Presidency Scorecard

(July-December 2021)

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 well-being;
- Commitment to the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities;
- The involvement and empowerment of users of mental health services.

SCALE OF APPRECIATION:



GOOD



FAIR



AVERAGE



POOR

Looking back – Expectations and Outcomes

Between July and December 2021, the second Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU took place. The six-month programme of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU was [based on four priorities](#). Under the slogan "Together. Resilient. Europe.", Slovenia pledged to facilitate the EU's recovery and reinforce its resilience, reflect on the future of Europe, strengthen the rule of law and European values, and increase security and stability in the European neighbourhood.

The large-scale health emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic prompted Slovenia to highlight strengthening the resilience of the European Union as one of its main priorities. Building a European Health Union and supporting the proposal to establish a Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA) was also a focus, in order to enhance the role of the EU and equip it with the appropriate tools to protect the health of European citizens.

In their programme, the Slovenian Presidency also set out to further reflect on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic in all relevant areas of the EU's activity and ensure that it is prepared to deal with different challenges. The Conference on the Future of Europe, a citizen-led series of debates and discussions to enable people from across Europe to share their ideas and help shape our common future, commenced on 9 May 2021 and is expected to conclude following the Slovenian Presidency in the spring of 2022. Intending to effectively managing migration pressures, Slovenia also strived to make progress in the negotiations on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum.

Promotion of mental health and well-being

During the Slovenian Presidency, disability or mental health were not identified as a top priority. However, several initiatives related to Mental Health Europe's areas of work. In November 2021, [Council Conclusions on strengthening the European Health Union](#) were approved which recalled that the health, economic and social insecurities due to the COVID-19 pandemic had negatively impacted mental health and spurred detrimental lifestyle habits and has disrupted health promotion and prevention programmes. Moreover, the Council Conclusions called for continuous and coordinated strategic investments in the improvement of health systems, to strengthen resilience and optimise healthcare in the future. Lastly, innovative solutions for resilient health systems and global health were two of the four priority areas of focus mentioned.



In line with the key priorities of the Slovenian Presidency to promote lifelong physical activity [Council Conclusions on Lifelong Physical Activity](#) were adopted on the 30th November 2021. Most notably the Conclusions underlined physical activity as one of the most important and effective factors in maintaining mental health throughout life. The document also stated that the long-term impact and aim was to improve physical and mental health, and to reduce pressure on our health systems and health-related costs. The Council Conclusions also called for policy agendas to be coordinated and for cross-sectoral cooperation to be encouraged in order to achieve the best possible outcome.

Following negotiations with the European Parliament, the Council [adopted](#) its decision on the European Year of Youth on 20 December 2021, providing further opportunities to bring forward youth perspective to the Union's policies. As part of the year, pressing issues will be brought to the forefront, including mental health and well-being, employment, equality and inclusion and sustainability.

Despite attention to health and resilience, there was no concrete focus on the area of mental health, although, the Presidency set out to implement the commitments agreed in May 2021 during the Porto Summit and mitigate the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, as also expressed by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, during her second [State of the Union \(SOTEU\) speech](#), the progress of the new Pact on Migration and Asylum has been disappointing.

Commitment to the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities

In addition, the Slovenian Presidency made no formal commitment to the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) in the Presidency Programme. As such, focus on disability and mental health remained largely absent. The conference [Empowering persons with disabilities to fully participate in society by increasing their mobility and disability](#) which took place on 20 November 2021, was the only event organised by the Presidency with a focus on disability. The event covered three areas, which focused on mobility and accessibility for persons with disabilities and included a session focused on the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 and another on the EU Disability Card.



The involvement and empowerment of users of mental health services

Despite the [Slovenian Presidency communicating](#) it is one of the most active countries in the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities and strongly supporting the participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society in the EU, they scored poorly on the involvement of experts by experience. This had largely to do with the lack of opportunities and events focused on mental health and transparency on engagement with users of mental health services. Although the Conference on the Future of Europe was presented as a promising tool to engage the citizens in dialogue on Europe's challenges and priorities around mental health, there was little evidence of the Presidency ensuring that perspectives of experts by experience were taken forwards.



Conclusion

The Slovenian Presidency performed well in areas such as resilience and digitalisation. Noteworthy, commitments were not conveyed in regard to psychosocial disabilities and the involvement of service users. This was certainly a missed opportunity to contribute to a more inclusive EU and to uphold human rights standards.