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The 2022 European Mental Health Week: It is time to speak up to shape a brighter future for young people

Hosted by Mental Health Europe (MHE), the third edition of the [European Mental Health Week on 9th-13th May 2022](#) is focusing on youth mental wellbeing. This year's theme '**Speak up for Mental Health**' is shining the spotlight on youth mental health as a high-profile societal issue. The campaign offers young people and their supporters the opportunity to participate in shaping the future of youth mental health.

Young people in Europe are in a particularly vulnerable situation when it comes to mental health. Even far before the onset of the pandemic, the [high rate of mental health problems among young people](#) was concerning: one in five adolescents were at risk of experiencing a mental health problem in any given year.

Latest research and reports from many sources reveal that young people are among the groups more at risk of marginalisation and are impacted by socio-economic determinants of health and wellbeing. In addition to this, the consequences of the pandemic put further pressure on young people's mental health. Many young people are finding that their lives have changed in unsettling ways.

The incidence of mental health problems among people aged between 15 and 24 [has in fact doubled in most European countries](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Young people have been [30% to 80% more likely](#) to experience depression, anxiety and loneliness than adults. Nine million adolescents (aged 10-19) experienced problems with their mental health and suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people in Europe ([UNICEF](#)). The pandemic has had a huge impact on the mental health of youth experiencing marginalisation, further enhancing exclusion, stigmatisation and restricting their access to healthcare. In addition, the impact of the war in Ukraine is adding another layer of distress in our societies.

Since [half of the mental health problems](#) affecting adults start during adolescence, the importance of increasing access to services, empowering young people and promoting their mental health cannot be emphasised enough.

Urgent and immediate policy action is needed, and we should start now to shape a brighter future for all. Addressing young people's mental health is not only a question of guaranteeing their wellbeing and ensuring that they can realise their full potential. It is about building healthy and resilient societies. Mental Health Europe is releasing a set of Policy Asks during the Awareness Week to mobilise people behind them and outline the way forward to support young people's mental health.

Better systems must be enabled to support young people's mental health. A meaningful mental health system change requires joint action to ensure adequate **prevention** of mental health problems, meaningful **empowerment**, active **engagement** of young people in decisions about their mental health, and targeted mental health support at every stage of life.

The time is now to prevent, empower, and support. Policymakers at European and national levels are called upon to commit to youth mental health and build a brighter future for the individual and society. Now more than ever, it is evident that immediate policy action is needed. The details of these Policy Asks will be released on Thursday 12 May during a Webinar hosted by MHE.

Catherine Brogan (President, Mental Health Europe): *"In speaking up for the mental health of our young people, it is important that we promote connectivity with each other, listen to the voice of young people,*

instil a sense of hope into our conversations on mental health to support young people to access help early, as well as aim to influence policy to ensure that the personal narrative of our youth and their unique identity as human beings does not become a series of labels.”

Claudia Marinetti (Director, Mental Health Europe): *“Social distancing, disruptions in education, low household income, poor early childhood care, insecurity about employment, our planet and our safety are among the many factors that place a strain on our mental wellbeing, and on that of young people in particular. If we want to make a positive change and improve youth mental health, we need to take measures now and make the right investments. We know what works and what has been shown not to work. Let’s act! Young people are our future, and their mental health should matter to all of us including policymakers and decision-makers.”*

At this year’s European Mental Health Week, the clear and loud voices of young people together with their families, carers, and friends call for EU and national decision-makers to act. Tangible actions, appropriate investments and systems are needed to support our youth. Together, let us build a brighter future for our young people in Europe.

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About Mental Health Europe: www.mhe-sme.org

About the European Mental Health Week: www.mhe-sme.org/emhw

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The European Mental Health Week



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