



**Mental
Health
Europe**

Equal rights.
Better mental health.
For all.



Empowering Change for a Mentally Healthy Europe for All

Mental Health Europe Strategy 2026-2030

Who we are



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Mental Health Europe is the leading independent European network working to protect the rights of people with psychosocial disabilities and mental health difficulties, promote positive mental health, prevent distress, and build more inclusive mental health systems across Europe.

Our 5-year strategy

For forty years, Mental Health Europe has worked to change how Europe understands and responds to mental health, shifting the focus from viewing it as an individual issue to recognising it as a shared social responsibility. As the leading independent European network, we advance a rights-based and psychosocial approach that values dignity, connection and belonging as essential to mental health.

We know that mental health does not exist in isolation. It is shaped by where we live, how we work, whether we are included and supported in our communities. It is also affected by wider forces such as conflict, displacement and geopolitical instability, which disrupt lives and communities across Europe and beyond. Mental health is further influenced by intersecting factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, disability, migration status and socio-economic conditions. Recognising and actively addressing these intersections means tackling the structural inequalities and barriers that prevent people from accessing support and realising their rights and ensuring that mental health promotion and care reflect the diversity of people's lived realities.

Our 78 members span across 30 countries and bring together lived experience, professional practice, service provision and policy expertise. We connect those working on the frontlines of change with those shaping laws and policies. We translate experience into evidence, and evidence into action.

Our strength lies in our independence and our conviction that better mental health for all is achievable when people are empowered, communities are resourced, and systems are transformed. We help policymakers and partners see the bigger picture: how housing, education, work, migration, and digital environments all shape wellbeing and how a mental health in all policies approach can deliver lasting impact.

As Europe faces new pressures from digitalisation and disinformation to widening inequalities and shifting political priorities, the need for a holistic and rights-based vision of mental health has never been more urgent.

Building on Mental Health Europe's 2021–2025 Strategy “If Not Now, When”, this new 2026–2030 Strategy will continue to build on the progress achieved. Through co-creation we will strengthen our collective voice and set out how MHE will lead the next phase of transformation: connecting evidence with lived and living experience, influencing European and national policy, and supporting communities to build inclusive and recovery-oriented systems across Europe.

Vision Mission and Values

Vision

A Europe where mental health is valued, and everyone can live well and thrive in supportive, inclusive communities.

Mission

Mental Health Europe works to strengthen the capacity of people, policymakers and communities to develop inclusive, rights-based policies and services that promote mental health, psychosocial wellbeing and recovery.

Our Belief

We believe mental health is a human right and that every person deserves dignity, connection and belonging. Good mental health flourishes when people feel safe, valued and included, and when our social, economic and relational environments allow each of us to live well and thrive together. Everyone should have the freedom and support to shape their own recovery, with access to diverse options that respect choice and autonomy.

Core Values:



1. Human Rights

Upholding the inherent dignity and rights of all people, ensuring that mental health is respected, protected and fulfilled as a human right, while addressing the intersecting inequalities that influence people's mental health and access to support.



2. Lived/Living Experience

Recognising the expertise, knowledge, leadership and insight of people with lived and living experience as integral to shaping mental health systems, policies and narratives.



3. Empowerment

Supporting individuals to be informed, confident and in control of their mental health and recovery, with access to diverse, rights-based support options.



4. Belonging

Fostering inclusive, caring societies where everyone can enjoy good mental health and feel valued, connected and part of their communities.



5. Co-creation

Working in true and meaningful collaboration that involves people with lived experience, their supporters, professionals and communities on an equal basis to design, implement and evaluate policies, services and initiatives that impact their lives.



6. Integrity

Maintaining ethical independence in all decision-making, free from commercial or political interests, to ensure unbiased advocacy, research and practice.



Why it matters

Mental health challenges across Europe are widespread, with nearly one in six people affected every year, yet adequate and inclusive care is still lacking. The World Health Organization estimates that around 40% of people with mental health difficulties in the EU do not receive the support they need. Too often, services continue to rely on outdated institutional models that do not comply with international law obligations, separate people from their communities, environments and sense of belonging.

Young people face particular pressures in this landscape. According to Eurofound, suicide is the leading cause of death among young people aged 15–29 in the EU. Many face barriers to accessing timely, youth-friendly and non-stigmatising support, while navigating uncertainty about education, work, housing and the future.

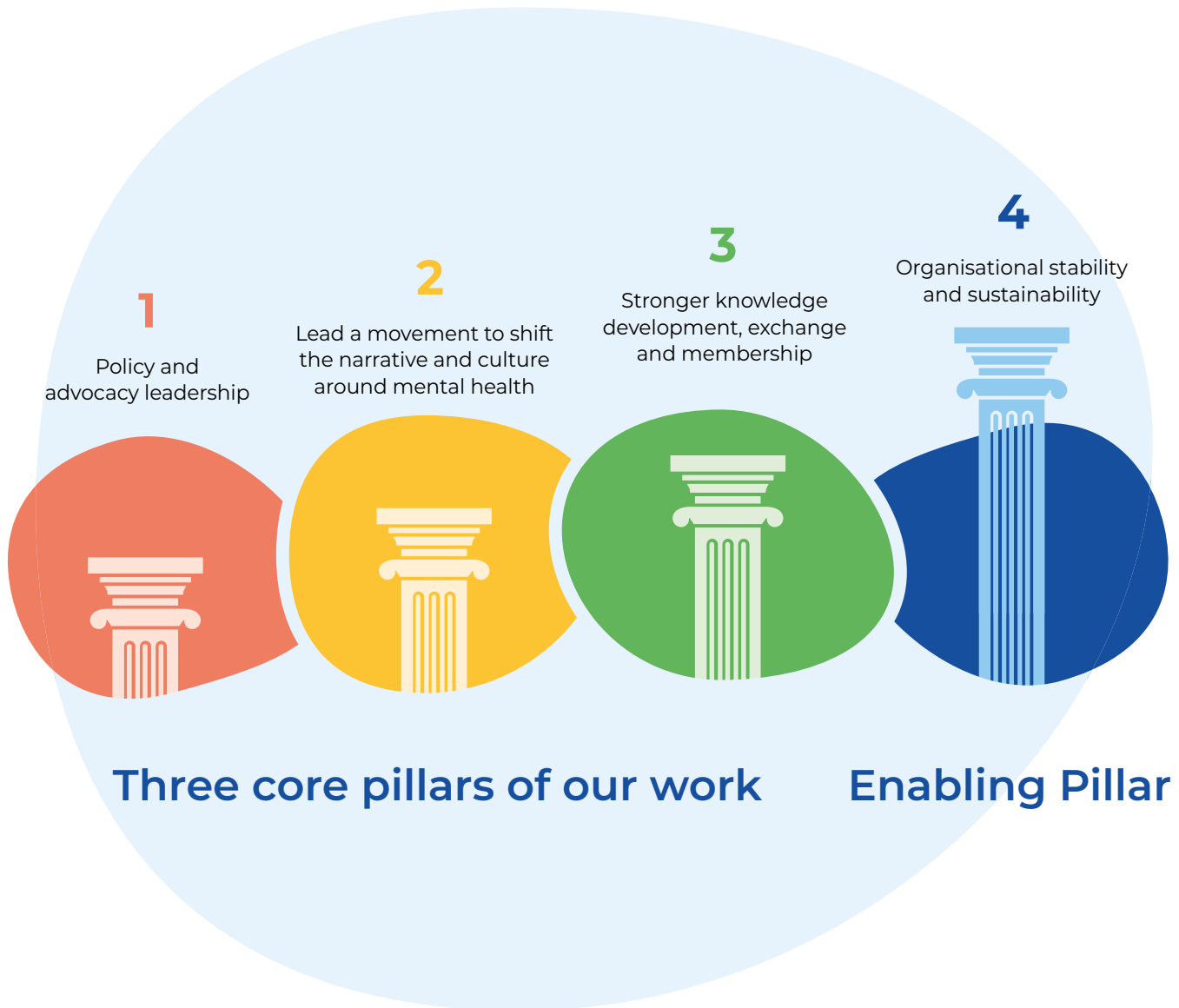
Despite growing recognition of mental health as a human right, and increasing awareness of the need to integrate mental health across all policies, too many people are still left without the support they need. Mental health systems across Europe are not equipped to meet the scale and complexity of today's challenges, from social and economic inequalities and rising digital harms to the mental health impacts of conflict, displacement and climate anxiety.

Poor mental health also comes at a high cost. It is estimated to reduce Europe's economic output by hundreds of billions of euros each year through lost productivity and unemployment, while placing additional strain on health and social care systems.

A movement for change is critical. By adopting a rights-based, recovery and community-focused approach, we can transform mental health systems and ensure that children, young people, adults and older people have the opportunities and choices to recover and thrive throughout their lives, and **build a Europe where everyone has the support they need to live well.**



Strategic pillars and objectives





Policy and advocacy leadership

Mental health is understood and prioritised across all EU policies, and a dedicated EU Mental Health Strategy is in place, which is comprehensive, cross-sectoral, and resourced with a clear monitoring system for accountability and transparency.

OBJECTIVE 1: Strengthen the EU's Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health

- ★ Call for and support a follow up to the Comprehensive approach through the development of a concrete EU Mental Health Strategy that cuts across policy domains (e.g. health, education, social inclusion, employment, digital).
- ★ Promote the development of a follow-up that is actionable and linked to the EU budget, includes measurable targets, and is embedded in monitoring and progress reporting frameworks aligned with international human rights standards, in particular the UNCRPD.

OBJECTIVE 2: Increase investment in mental health promotion and community-based, recovery-oriented services

- ★ Advocate for more EU and national-level investment for inclusive, community-based mental health services that respect rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities.
- ★ Support the scaling of mental health promotion and early intervention measures that address socioeconomic determinants of mental health.

OBJECTIVE 3: Embed mental health across EU policy and political agendas

- ★ Drive the recognition and integration of mental health into all relevant EU policy frameworks, including those addressing social protection, disability, equality, employment, youth, and digitalization.
- ★ Strengthen strategic relationships with diverse political groups, EU Commission DGs, and parliamentary committees to elevate mental health as a cross-party and cross-policy priority.

OBJECTIVE 4: Advance commitment to upholding human rights, the psychosocial approach and a shift to community-based care

- ★ Promote respect for human rights and dignity for everyone, including the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities, in line with the UNCRPD.
- ★ Advocate for and support decisive policy action towards deinstitutionalisation, including the closure of long-stay institutions and the development of rights-based supported housing in the community.
- ★ Build collective recognition of the psychosocial approach as the default approach to mental health care.
- ★ Elicit and guide changes in law, policy and practice to eliminate coercion in mental health services.



Lead a movement to shift the narrative and culture around mental health

We will drive a cultural shift in how Europe understands and responds to mental health. From stigma to solidarity, and from clinical narratives to positive, psychosocial, rights-based and community-driven approaches. People with lived and living experience, members and partners will co-create this movement in shared power- shaping values, policies, and daily practices across society.

OBJECTIVE 5: Deepen understanding and shift the narrative and culture around mental health

- ★ Promote a psychosocial and rights-based understanding of mental health that reflects lived realities, and centres choice, hope, and community.
- ★ Engage people across all ages, along with policymakers, media and communities, through inclusive storytelling that amplifies diverse voices and challenges stigma.
- ★ Strengthen public understanding through accessible campaigns and dissemination of tools and written materials that highlight rights-based and community approaches to mental health.

OBJECTIVE 6: Mobilise and engage a pan-European movement for change

- ★ Position European Mental Health Week (EMHW) as a leading annual campaign that drives visibility and action across Europe, empowering members and partners to engage through shared messages and coordinated initiatives.
- ★ Embed the centrality of lived/living experience in campaigns and public communications, with people directly affected as creators, spokespeople and leaders of change.
- ★ Strengthen partnerships with civil society organisations beyond the mental health sector (e.g. youth, education, culture, digital) to broaden the reach and relevance of our collective work.



Stronger knowledge development, exchange and membership

Our knowledge and membership base will be stronger, deeper and more inclusive to drive meaningful change for mental health across Europe.

OBJECTIVE 7: Strengthen evidence base in mental health through co-creation

- ★ Strengthen partnerships with academic institutions, professional networks and civil society organisations to co-create research and knowledge.
- ★ Include young people and people with lived and living experience across the life course to meaningfully shape knowledge outputs and policy recommendations.
- ★ Increase the availability and uptake of user-friendly knowledge products that translate evidence into practice and policy impact.
- ★ Establish a sustainable, open-access knowledge and resource hub that drives continuous learning and exchange of good practice.

OBJECTIVE 8: Strengthen and diversify MHE membership and engagement structures

- ★ Increase strategic growth and greater diversity in MHE's membership and strive towards alignment with members' diverse needs.
- ★ Strengthen effective engagement structures that enable members to shape and influence MHE's advocacy and communication agenda.
- ★ Enhance members' capacity to engage in advocacy, research, and co-creation at national and European levels.
- ★ Build a stronger community of practice between members through structured cross-country collaboration, partnerships, exchange of good practices, joint capacity building and mutual learning to drive innovation in community-based mental health.

Organisational stability and sustainability

OBJECTIVE 9: Ensure financial sustainability and strengthen internal processes

- ★ Achieve sustainable and diversified funding that is fully aligned with MHE's mission and values.
- ★ Increase core and unrestricted income, expand donor base (public, private, philanthropic) and strengthen relationships with long term funders.
- ★ Ensure efficiency in internal operations and governance and strengthen organisational safeguarding frameworks.

OBJECTIVE 10: Foster a supportive and impact-oriented organisational culture

- ★ Encourage learning, feedback, and innovation across the team and membership.
- ★ Align organisational culture with mission and values and proactively address psychosocial risks at work, fostering a safe, healthy and supportive environment for staff and members.
- ★ Retain and develop a diverse, skilled, and motivated team.





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**THIS IS A UNIQUE MOMENT
FOR MENTAL HEALTH, AND
FOR MENTAL HEALTH EUROPE.**

Join us in making an impact
for human rights-based
and recovery oriented
mental health systems
of the future!

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