



Adequate funding needed to support migrants' mental health, new report finds

Brussels, 18 December 2019 - Newly arrived migrants in Europe do not have access to appropriate mental health support during the journey and upon arrival, finds a summary report released on International Migrants Day by the European Public Health Alliance and Mental Health Europe. The lack of support, especially in the face of abuse, is a key factor leading to their further marginalisation and poverty.

The document, based on research on the use of EU funds to address the mental health of newly arrived migrants in Europe, focused on Italy and Greece as the main countries of arrival in the aftermath of the 2015-16 migrant influx.

Violence, persecution and extreme hardship trigger the departure from the country of origin, and continue throughout the journey, which is often experienced alone – including by a large number of unaccompanied minors – without access to support networks. The nature and conditions of excessively long journeys, and lack of access to adequate health facilities en route further heightens the risk of mental distress. Female migrants and children are at a heightened risk of experiencing human rights abuses. In Europe, migrants may be confronted with unsafe reception centres, detention, complex administrative challenges, the threat of deportation and denial of basic services and protection (e.g., housing, education, employment) leading to poverty, discrimination, and social exclusion.

Caring for the mental health of migrants requires responses which go beyond biomedical interventions and are person-centred and culturally sensitive. The new European Commission and European Parliament must seize the opportunity to improve the status quo for migrant reception and integration, and ensuring adequate funding and sustainability of EU-funded projects for migrants' mental health is an important part of this.

"Our research and interviews in Italy and Greece confirmed that the mental health of migrants is often not properly addressed upon arrival in Europe, which means that already vulnerable refugees are in danger of becoming even more susceptible to mental ill-health. While there are a number of EU-funded projects in this area, there needs to be a sustainable way to provide longer-term support. It is important that EU projects are not implemented in silos: national structures need to be able to complement them by providing follow-up and continuity, especially given that asylum procedures are often very lengthy and the outcomes are increasingly uncertain", said EPHA Deputy Director Sascha Marschang.

"Migrants with psychosocial disabilities are an invisible group in a particularly vulnerable situation. They face multiple barriers to access the services and are at increased risk of social exclusion. To ensure inclusive and cohesive societies, adequate funding for migrants' mental health and better coordination of its use is necessary," stated MHE Director Claudia Marinetti.

EPHA and MHE call on European policymakers to prioritise the following:

1. Strive for complementarity between EU funding and national funding streams and existing initiatives to contribute to the sustainability of implemented projects.
2. Any mental health project for migrants should fit within a national mental health strategy and simultaneously build the capacity of national/regional mental health systems by involving regions and municipalities in projects.
3. Use EU funds to build capacity in the community rather than developing separate silos of services for migrants.
4. Scale up mental health as an integral part of funding related to migrants; this would oblige Member States to report more thoroughly on the mental health initiatives funded and their impact on the target group(s).

Download the full report [here](#)

For further information please contact:

Sascha Marschang, Deputy Director, European Public Health Alliance sascha@epha.org

Claudia Marinetti, Director, Mental Health Europe claudia.marinett@mhe-sme.org

The **European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)** is a change agent – Europe's leading NGO advocating for better health. We are a dynamic member-led organisation, made up of public health NGOs, patient groups, health professionals, and disease groups working together to improve health and strengthen the voice of public health in Europe. <http://www.ephpa.org/>

Mental Health Europe (MHE) is the largest European non-governmental network organisation working to advocate for positive mental health and well-being. We continuously champion social inclusion, the improvement of care and the protection of human rights for (ex)users of mental health services, their families and carers. We raise awareness to end mental health stigma throughout Europe. <http://www.mhe-sme.org/>