



European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) – Contribution to MEP Maria Walsh Survey to inform her work on mental health in the European Parliament.

As part of its ongoing commitment to advancing and safeguarding mental health, EPHA submitted a response to the public survey launched by Maria Walsh MEP to inform her work on mental health in the European Parliament. The survey was designed to gather high-quality data and evidence-based insights to support the development of strong, impactful policies that can improve mental health outcomes, particularly for citizens in Ireland. EPHA welcomes this initiative as a step towards more inclusive, informed, and responsive policymaking that recognises the central role of mental health in public health and social equity across Europe.

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Organisation:* European Public Health Alliance

Where are you based?*

- Ireland
- Belguim
- Other:

What is your role in the mental health sector?*

- Individual/Patient (No Professional Role)
- Healthcare Provider
- Mental Health Organisation
- Academic/Researcher
- Policy Maker
- Other: *Civil Society Organization, being a certified psychologist and holding a PhD in Psychology*

What are the top three challenges in mental health care according to your work/experience?*

- Access to care
- Stigma
- Funding
- Workforce shortages
- Lack of community support
- Digital health gaps
- Lack of workplace supports
- Other:

Mental Health Challenges

Which of the following is a barrier(s) to individuals accessing mental health support?*

- Long waiting times
- Lack of awareness
- Geographic barriers
- Cost of care
- Stigma
- Other: *Collecting high quality data that can guide targeted initiatives.*

Role of the European Union

What role do you think the EU should play in supporting mental health initiatives?*

- Major role, EU funding and initiatives are crucial
- Moderate role, the EU should complement national efforts
- Minimal role, this is mainly a national issue
- Not sure
- Other:

In which of the following areas do you believe the EU can play a role?*

- Increased EU funding for mental health
- Standardisation of care across the EU
- Workplace supports and initiatives
- EU-wide mental health education campaigns
- Training for mental health professionals
- Other: *Improved surveillance mechanisms*

What three areas should the EU prioritise in its approach to mental health?*

Based on the five pillars of the EC Communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health, the three suggested areas to prioritise are:

1. *Promotion of good mental health, developing initiatives that aim to increase mental health literacy and awareness, emotional resilience, and social connectedness.*
2. *Prevention of mental health problems, with a particular focus on the workplace and online spaces.*
3. *Mental health support and equitable access to treatment and care.*

Sharing Resources

Can you provide a link(s) to your work on mental health, including research, surveys, data.

EPHA has actively engaged with EU policymakers in the past, particularly in response to the European Commission's Communication on a Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health. Here are two examples that include multiple policy recommendations:

<https://epha.org/a-comprehensive-approach-to-mental-health/>

<https://epha.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/first-years-first-priority-response-to-ec-mental-health-communication.pdf>

Moreover, during the past year EPHA has developed a focus group that aimed to identify and develop better mental health and wellbeing indicators at the population level. This works takes a positive psychology and a strengths-based approach, moving beyond deficit-based measures, focusing on mental wellbeing and emotional resilience. The results of the work of this focus group will be published on EPHA's website within the next two weeks and will additionally be shared with Maria Walsh by email as requested.

If you cannot provide a link, please email to maria.walsh@europarl.europa.eu with 'Mental Health survey' in the subject line.

Can you share an example(s) of a successful mental health initiative or programme you've encountered? Could this be replicated at an EU level?

Probably the most comprehensive to-date public health effort to design and implement positive mental health indicators has been carried out by the Public Health Agency of Canada: The Positive Mental Health Surveillance Indicator Framework, which comprises 5 outcome indicators ("Self-rated mental health", "Happiness", "Life satisfaction", "Psychological well-being" and "Social well-being"). This framework has been successfully implemented and updated data is made publicly accessible through the website of the Government of Canada. The online data tool also allows for the visualization of disaggregated data, as statistics can be broken down by life course, household income quintile, province/territory, urban/rural residency and immigrant status.

<https://health-infobase.canada.ca/positive-mental-health/>

<https://health-infobase.canada.ca/positive-mental-health/data-tool/>

<https://health-infobase.canada.ca/positive-mental-health/Publications>

This example highlights the urgency and opportunity to establish a unified European framework aligned with the objectives of the EU Communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health, which calls for the promotion of good mental health and the prevention of mental health problems across the population as well as for the generation of new mental health indicators. The Public Health Agency of Canada has published a series of scientific papers and additional materials that would allow for the replication of this model at the EU level (available through the provided links). More recommendations for better mental health surveillance at the EU level can be found in EPHA's Better and Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing Indicators Consensus Report, which will be shared with Maria Walsh by email.

Thank you for taking the time to help me with this vital work. Is there anything else you would like to share on this issue?

I would be glad to follow up this survey with a short interview to share more information about EPHA's suggested strategies to improve mental wellbeing.

ABOUT EPHA

EPHA is a change agent, Europe's leading NGO alliance advocating for better health. A member-led organisation made up of public health NGOs, patient groups, health professionals and disease groups, we work to improve health and strengthen the voice of public health in Europe. Our actions and campaigns reflect our values: equity, solidarity, sustainability, universality, diversity and good governance.

Since formal establishment in spring 1993, EPHA has built a solid network of nearly 50 members dedicated to providing better health for all. Our mission is to bring together the public health community to provide thought leadership and facilitate change; to build public health capacity to deliver equitable solutions to European public health challenges, to improve health and reduce health inequalities. Our vision is of a Europe with universal good health and well-being, where all have access to a sustainable and high-quality health system: A Europe whose policies and practices contribute to health, both within and beyond its borders.