



# Mental Health

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Posted by: **Mental Health Europe**



Though mental health is not a core competence of the European Union, the European Parliament decision making in the areas of social, disability, migratory and human rights policy are likely to have a direct impact on the wellbeing of millions of Europeans and on persons living with mental ill health and psychosocial disabilities.

Before the 2014 European Elections, Mental Health Europe encouraged its wide membership to call on Members of the European Parliament to show more commitment to mental health through:

- The mainstreaming of mental health in all relevant EU policies;
- An active role of the European Parliament in supporting the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) by the European Union and more respect of the Convention's articles in all the areas within the field of competence;
- More actions and commitment to tackle prejudices and stigma associated with mental health ill health through relevant projects and policies;
- Strong support to deinstitutionalisation by making make sure that EU Funds are used to facilitate the shift from institutional to community services and

are used to facilitate the shift from institutional to community services and that EU Funds will not be used for institutions any longer;

- More support to the representation of independent organisations working in the field of mental health to allow for active participation of (ex-)users of mental health services in EU policy-making.

Mainstreaming mental health in all European policies is important and possible. Mental health is not only about health but about the social issues and barriers we face, how we work, where we live, and our basic human rights: it cannot be addressed in silos. That is why Mental Health Europe advocates for a psychosocial approach to mental health, which instead of defining mental ill-health as a 'disease' or 'illness' caused by biological factors, looks to a person's life and social environment, treating these factors as important in understanding well-being and mental ill health. It appreciates the lived experience of people who have experienced mental distress and recognises them as experts in their own lives.

A number of MEPs members of the MHE Coalition for Mental Health and Well-being in the European Parliament have been receptive to this approach and have tried to support and promote it through the formulation of amendments, the initiation of own initiative reports and articles in the media and by supporting relevant events in the European Parliament.

During the current mandate, the European Parliament has made certain but limited progress on promoting and mainstreaming mental health and the rights of people with psychosocial disabilities.

## **Thumbs up for the European Parliament**

### **Human Rights and the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

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European Parliament. The overall aim of the Disability Intergroup is to promote the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities including psychosocial disabilities, without discrimination of any kind on the basis of disability, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD).

There has been thematic focus on some issues which are important to persons with psychosocial disabilities within the Disability Intergroup including prioritising migration issues, independent living and de-institutionalisation and going forward – voting rights of persons with disabilities in the context of 2019 elections.

The Parliament adopted an own-initiative report on implementation of the UN CRPD and the recommendations from the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to the EU in 2016. MEP Stevens was the Special Rapporteur for this report and it reflected the barriers faced by persons with psychosocial disabilities.

In 2017, a follow-up report has been in the works, which will respond to the progress report on the Disability Strategy published by the Commission at the beginning of 2017. Preparation for the report has included extensive consultation with workshops on the 8 areas covered by the Strategy chaired by Disabled Persons Organisations and stakeholders (including MHE). The report is expected to be adopted later this year, with first drafts looking promising from a mental health perspective.

## **Social Policy**

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Mental Health Europe regretted the lack of mention of mental health in the European Parliament report on the Social Pillar. You can access the document [here](#).

A resolution on work-life balance which highlighted the fact that women and LGBTI persons face gender-based sources of stress at work that threaten their mental health. You can access the document [here](#).

### **Occupational Health and Safety**

A 2015 resolution on health and safety at work, which underlined the importance of a physically and mentally safe and healthy working environment to achieve active and healthy ageing for workers.

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### **Gender and Mental Health**

The 2017 report on Promoting gender equality in mental health and clinical research was adopted.

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The Parliament has recently discussed the proposed EU ratification of the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention on combatting violence against women and girls by the EU with several hearings on the matter. A first LIBE/FEMM joint hearing on the issue took place on 29 November 2016. It was followed by a second joint hearing, which was held on 27 March 2017, whose aim was to highlight the importance as well as the necessity for the EU to access the Istanbul convention as a unique body. More specifically, there is a draft interim report in the works led by the LIBE and FEMM Committees and

...drafted by two rapporteurs, Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (EPP – Sweden) and Christine Revault D’Allonnes Bonnefoy (S&D – France). MHE has submitted amendments for the inclusion of the mental health impacts which result from gender-based violence, including trauma, and hope that these issues will be included in the final adopted report.

## **Migration and Mental Health**

Amendments on mental health were made this year to the reception standards directive opinion.

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## **Mental Health Coalitions and Interest Groups**

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However, the Coalition’s potential is not fully explored both in terms of size and impact. Since 2014, the Coalition supported 5 events on mental health in the European Parliament (on employment of people living with mental ill health, on active ageing and mental health, on the UN CRPD with regards to person with psychosocial disabilities, on youth mental health, on migration and mental health). You can find more information [here](#).

The European Parliament interest group on mental health, wellbeing and brain disorders (of which MHE is not a member because of its medical approach to mental health) is also very active and this shows positive commitment from the MEPs involved in this specific group.

# Thumbs Down for the European Parliament

The European Joint Action on Mental health and Wellbeing came to an end in January 2016 and resulted in The European Framework for Action on Mental Health and Wellbeing and the re-launched EU Compass for Action on Mental Health and Wellbeing.

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You can read more about the initiatives [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).

Take a look as well [here](#).

The resulting Framework is the designated end product of over 10 years of EU co-operation on mental health and there is unlikely to be another document which is as comprehensive and comparative adopted at European level anytime soon. It is therefore concerning to see that there has been no follow-up to the Joint Action or Framework for Action in the European Parliament.

This leaves the 2008 European Pact for Mental Health and Well-being as the last concrete action on mental health in which the European Parliament was involved (10 years ago). The limited involvement of the European Parliament in the new Framework and Compass should be addressed as a priority.

## Towards 2019

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Within the European Parliament, MEPs should:

- **Put mental health back on the EU Parliament agenda** with a Parliament initiative that takes stock of mental health policy since 2014 and suggests new areas of work going forward.
- Demonstrate leadership in the UN CRPD implementation **and keep the political pressure on the human rights of people with mental health problems** by continuing to push for full implementation of the 2015 recommendations from the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities implemented including those which affect persons with psychosocial disabilities.
- Advocate **for the continuation of the use of European funds** to support the transition from institutional to community-based services.
- **Call for a European year for Mental Health.**
- Demonstrate **leadership and involvement in the follow-up of the Joint Action** and the resulting Framework for Action and the rebooted EU Compass.
- Support the **Joint-statement on mental health for the EU Health Policy Platform signed and endorsed by 21+ European Organisations** and **which calls for concerted effort** to follow on from the Joint Action and Framework and the improvement of mental health through European policies.
- More MEPs to show support in the **Coalition for Mental Health and Wellbeing in the European Parliament**
- Support a **EU wide anti-stigma campaign** as suggested by the UN CRPD Committee
- More **involvement and engagement with mental health service** users and representative organisations
- Support for work life balance and employment policies, particularly ensure that mental health and the rights of people with psychosocial disabilities will be fully included in the final text of the Directive on Work-Life Balance for parents and carers

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## Standout MEPS



**Julie Ward**



### **Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats**

In the current parliament, MEP Julie Ward has showed commitment to mental health through co-authoring a report laying out a strategy on promoting gender equality in mental health and clinical trials, participating in events related to mental health inside and outside the EU Parliament, becoming member of the MHE Coalition for Mental Health and Well-being in the EU Parliament and by contributing to articles about the need for an 'all of society' approach to mental health.



### **Miriam Dalli**

#### **Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats**

In the current parliament, MEP Miriam Dalli has showed commitment to mental health by becoming Chair of the MHE Coalition for Mental Health and well-being. Miriam Dalli and her team have supported the organisation of a successful EU Parliament event for World Mental Health Day on young people and digitalisation in 2016. On many occasions, MEP Dalli had the opportunity to renew her commitment to the mental health through the publication of video messages, organisation of events and/or media features.



### **Deirdre Clune**

#### **Group of the European People's Party**

In the current parliament, MEP Deirdre Clune has showed commitment to mental health by becoming member of the MHE Coalition for Mental Health and Well-being and by submitting amendments calling for adequate mental health care for asylum seekers on arrival in the EU as part of the revision of reception conditions for asylum seekers. MEP Clune and her team have also initiated and supported the organisation of a successful event in the EU Parliament on active ageing and mental health.



