



## **Statement of the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations on Mental Health**

### ***Agenda Item (d) European Mental Health Action Plan 2014-2020***

*63<sup>rd</sup> Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe  
September 16-19<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Cesme Izmir, Turkey*

Mental illness is a significant threat to European development. Over 38% of all European citizens suffer from a mental disorder<sup>1</sup>. As stated by the WHO Director General, “the magnitude, suffering and burden in terms of disability and costs for individuals, families and societies are staggering.”

First, mental health is a unique concern for the European youth. Mental Illness among young people are more common now than ever before in the European Union. Up to one-fifth of young Europeans suffer from mental health illnesses<sup>2</sup>. Depression is the single largest contributor to the global burden of disease of people aged 15-19 and suicide is one of the 5 leading causes of mortality for young people. As such, we, as a youth organization representing future physicians, call upon the WHO and Member States to address specific needs and opportunities to target young people in the implementation of the action plan with a particular focus on prevention and mental health promotion as well as the mental health needs of vulnerable populations including LGBT youth. It is imperative that these efforts also address the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness through, for example, education and media campaigns.

Second, we are concerned by the lack of integration of mental health in the NCD action plan and its little emphasis in the Health 2020 agenda discussions. Without effective integration, we worry that global action on NCDs - and, in particular, the four areas of focus - will be inconsistent with the WHO's definition of health, “mental, social and physical well-being.” We urge Member States to recognize that mental health must be appropriately integrated into health systems and universal health care reforms.

Third, there is a need invest more in data collection and research into the burden of mental illness, its prevention, diagnosis and treatment. We urge Member States to ensure that sufficient resources are allocated for this purpose. Furthermore, we encourage Member States to work cooperatively with the education sector, especially medical education, to address mental health in the context of universal health coverage and primary health care.

---

<sup>1</sup> “The size and burden of mental health disorders and other disorders of the brain in Europe 2010” by Wittchen et al. 2011

<sup>2</sup> EU Youth Report 2012



# IFMSA

International Federation of  
Medical Students' Associations

---

## **IFMSA at a Glance**

Founded in 1951, the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) is the world's oldest and largest independent Medical Students' organization representing medical students from around the world. IFMSA currently maintains 115 National Member Organizations from more than 100 countries that are the home to about 1.2 million medical students. IFMSA is recognized as an international nongovernmental organization by the United Nations and the World Health Organization and is a proud partner of various international bodies such as the World Medical Association. At the European level, IFMSA has also institutional relations with the Council of Europe, the European Union Health Policy Forum, the European Alcohol and Health Forum (EAHF), the Association for Medical Education in Europe, the European Youth Forum (YFJ), among others.

Created to make a positive impact on the world, IFMSA has inspired generations of medical students to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to take on current and emerging challenges in medicine and global health. Annually, the IFMSA network provides opportunities to medical students through its two general assemblies, five regional meetings, around 10,000 international exchange program slots, hundreds of national and international projects, and dozens of international campaigns on issues ranging from climate change to global health equity.