



The Mental Health Coalition: a WHO/Europe flagship initiative

➔ What is the flagship?

WHO/Europe launched the new **Mental Health Coalition** to position and promote mental health as a critical priority for public health across the Member States of the WHO European Region over the next 5 years. The Coalition is focused on:

- **transforming attitudes** about mental health;
- expediting mental health **service reforms**; and
- accelerating progress towards **universal health coverage** for people with mental health conditions.

➔ Moving the mental health agenda forward

This initiative will bolster existing efforts and contribute to the implementation of the European Programme of Work by reinforcing the central pillars of **leaving no one behind** and supporting leadership capacity. It will contribute to the stated goals of **promoting health and well-being**, moving populations towards universal health coverage and **protecting health in the context of emergencies** (in particular the COVID-19 pandemic and the mental health and psychosocial support response to it).

WHO/Europe's mental health programme already works in more than 25 Member States to develop and implement national policies and plans in line with the European Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2020, and to address mental health needs across the life course and across the full spectrum of services and delivery platforms.

However, country implementation of WHO guidance, tools and good practices at scale is too rarely fulfilled due to embedded stigma at all levels of society and low levels of prioritization and investment within health systems. New efforts and approaches are therefore required.

Even in more resourced countries,

only 1 in 3 people



with depression currently

receive care and support.

In less resourced countries, it can be as low as

1 in 20.

➔ Why does mental health matter?

A fundamental element of any individual's health and well-being, including their capacity to live a fulfilling life, is the enjoyment of good mental health. Indeed, there can be no health without mental health. Yet mental well-being is far from assured, and is put at risk by exposure to a wide range of determinants that affect individuals, families and communities. These include gender inequalities, social deprivation and poverty, unemployment, migration, conflict and – as so vividly demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic – disease outbreaks and their associated countermeasures.

The prevalence of mental health conditions is already high, and is expected to rise dramatically in the face of the pandemic and its socioeconomic repercussions. Comorbidity with other noncommunicable diseases is also frequent, with mental health conditions sharing many of the same risk factors, such as harmful use of alcohol.

The stigma attached to mental health conditions remains very high. Individuals and families affected by mental health conditions are routinely abused and discriminated against, and their rights as citizens and users of public health services are commonly violated. Heavily entrenched stigma also adversely influences policy and resource allocation (low prioritization), health-care practices (coercion, restraint and other human rights violations in institutional care) and public attitudes (victimization and social exclusion).

Over **110 million people** in the European Region live with **mental health conditions** accounting for over **10% of the population**



➔ What will the Mental Health Coalition do?

The Coalition will work to:

1. **INVOLVE** all relevant stakeholders in the development of an implementation and monitoring framework for mental health promotion, protection and care in the Region (2021–2030) in order to build accountability and provide consensus on prioritized actions for investment and scale-up;
2. **INSPIRE** policy-makers, service users and service providers through the formation of a mental health leadership, advocacy and innovation network and a multipartner coalition at WHO/Europe;
3. **INFORM** decision-makers, practitioners and the public via the implementation of a Region-wide mental health awareness and literacy programme to change attitudes about mental illness and promote mental health;
4. **INVEST** in mental health system reform by carrying out investment cases in selected countries and mobilizing catalytic funds for the reorganization of care away from mental hospitals towards community-based services that are fully integrated with mainstream health services; and
5. **INTENSIFY** country support for mental health system strengthening and service development, including by moving targeted populations towards universal health coverage.

➔ Outcomes

By the end of 2025, this flagship initiative is expected to deliver:

- an implementation plan, a monitoring framework and associated targets/indicators for mental health promotion and protection in the Region (agreed in 2021 for the period 2021–2030);
- a multipartner coalition, a leadership network and new donor funds for mental health based at WHO/Europe;
- mental health literacy initiatives in more than 10 European Region countries; and access to quality and affordable community-based mental health care for at least 15 million more people.

140,000 lives are lost each year to suicide in the European Region

➔ Measures of success

The Coalition's success will be measured through its:

- **input:** increased mental health investment/expenditures (especially in countries selected for intensified support);
- **process:** number of partners engaged/leaders capacitated (Region-wide);
- **outputs:** improved mental health awareness/attitudes (in countries where literacy initiatives are conducted) and increased treatment coverage for severe mental health conditions (in countries selected for intensified support); and
- **outcome:** reduced suicide mortality rate.

➔ **Partnership:** Realizing these ambitions will depend on active engagement and close partnership with a range of stakeholders. The establishment of the new Mental Health Coalition in the Region will provide the overarching structure for exchange among partners within different Member States, international and nongovernmental organizations, academia, and civil society.