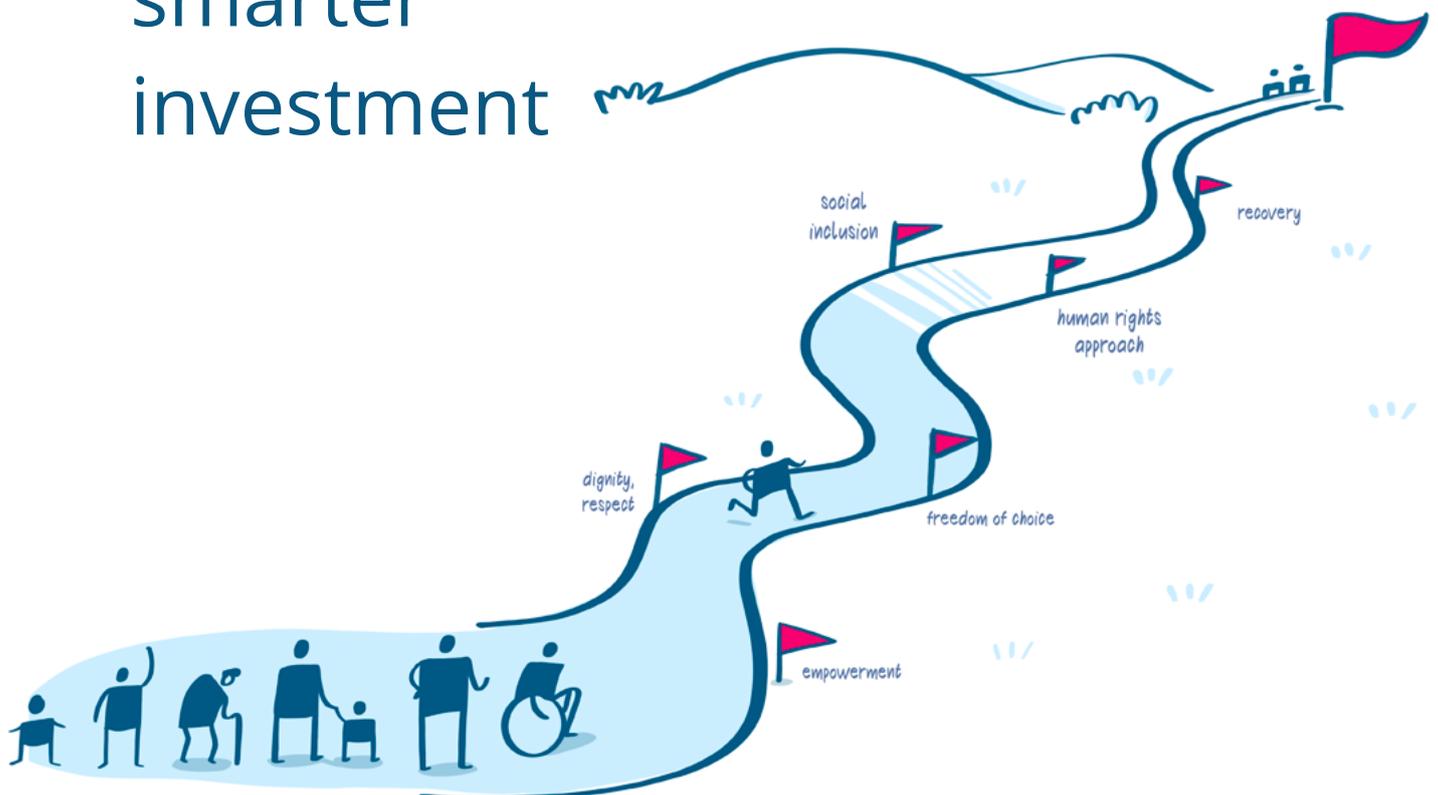


# KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Mental health for all:  
Greater access,  
smarter  
investment





Mental health is largely, and unfortunately, a neglected aspect of public health.

At least [one in six people](#) (84 million) across the Member States of the European Union (EU) has mental ill-health. Globally, mental health problems are considered the [leading cause of disability](#). [Data](#) from the European Commission and the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) show that life expectancy of people with mental health problems is 10 to 20 years less than the general population. The overall costs related to mental ill-health are estimated to exceed 4% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) across the 28 EU Member States.

A variety of social, economic, environmental factors and health determinants cause mental ill-health.

For instance, [data](#) from the European Commission and the OECD show that across the EU Member States, people with low income are two times more likely to experience mental health problems than those who are economically better off. Similarly, people with employment tend to experience mental ill-health less likely. At the same time, unemployed people

with mental health problems often see an improvement in their mental well-being upon finding employment as this provides a sense of self-esteem and stability.

In 2020, the lockdown measures due to coronavirus, the abrupt halt in the economy and rise of unemployment, along with bewilderment of having to deal with unforeseen circumstances have additionally contributed to negatively impact to the well-being and mental health of many Europeans.

As the EU and European countries are developing measures and mobilising financial resources to contrast the spread of the coronavirus pandemic and prepare recovery plans, it is clear that mental health remains an overlooked aspect.



If adequately considered, it can have a positive impact on the well-being and enjoyment of human rights and contribute to [social inclusion, growth and cohesion](#).

The new long-term EU budget, and particularly its EU4Health Programme, has the potential to do just that. Yet, its utility and strength will depend on the final objectives and overall resource allocation.

To celebrate [World Mental Health Day](#) (WMHD), Mental Health Europe (MHE) hosted a [high-level seminar](#) “The future of mental health, rights, and recovery in Europe” to discuss how to turn the COVID-19 crisis into a catalyst for change in European mental healthcare. In line with the theme of this year’s WMHD, which calls for a scale-up in investment in mental health, MHE urges the EU and European countries to:

1



Adopt a **comprehensive and well-resourced [European Mental Health Strategy](#)** as part of the long-term recovery strategies to mitigate the consequences of the current crisis

2



**[Allocate adequate funding to mental health support and care](#)**, with a particular focus on investing in peer workers, community-based services and integrated care

3



**[Allocate adequate funding to address the socio-economic determinants](#)** of mental ill-health (e.g. poverty and unemployment, forms of inequalities and discrimination, barriers in access to healthcare) and invest in prevention

4



Improve **awareness of mental health issues** and reduce the stigma associated with mental health problems

5



Reaffirm the EU’s **commitment to the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities** within the upcoming Disability Rights Strategy 2020-2030, in particular key areas of concern for persons with psychosocial disabilities. This includes commitments to legal capacity and supported decision-making, free and informed consent, ending coercive practices and deinstitutionalisation processes.

Finally, when designing, adopting, implementing and evaluating any of these actions, it is crucial to include organisations representing users and ex-users of mental health services throughout the process as representatives of persons with psychosocial disabilities. Therefore, every mental health initiative must have dedicated budget plans to support these organisations as civil society representatives to ensure their meaningful and effective participation.

Mental Health Europe (MHE) is the largest independent European network organisation working to promote positive mental health and wellbeing, prevent mental health problems, support and advance the rights of people with mental ill-health or psychosocial disabilities.

For more information on COVID-19 and mental health, please see Mental Health Europe's resource page: [www.bit.ly/COVID19-MentalHealth](http://www.bit.ly/COVID19-MentalHealth)



The work of Mental Health Europe is supported by the European Commission through the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme. The information contained in this document does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.

The work of Mental Health Europe is supported in part by a grant from the Foundations Open Society Institute in cooperation with the Public Health Program of the Open Society Foundations.