



MHE's initial reflections on the European Pillar for Social Rights What's in it for mental health?

On Thursday, 04 March 2021, the European Commission [published](#) the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan. After a year of consultation with stakeholders, the Action Plan sets out concrete actions to implement the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) to build a more Social Europe and address the socio-economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic.

While the [Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030](#) remains the main instrument to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities, including psychosocial disabilities, the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan is an important instrument to address the socio-economic determinants of mental health and promote positive well-being for all. Therefore, by establishing, for instance, measures to reduce unemployment and poverty, the Action Plan contributes to preventing distress related to unfavourable events and situations that might lead to mental ill-health.

In line with the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#), the Action Plan sets out three targets for the European Union (EU) to be achieved by 2030:

- At least 78% of people aged 20 to 64 should be in employment;
- At least 60% of all adults should participate in training every year;
- The number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion should be reduced by at least 15 million.

More specific to mental health care, the Action Plan acknowledges the additional strain that the pandemic put on already challenged systems. It shows the European Commission's commitment to reinforce the systems and increase their resilience by supporting the Member States through evidence-based information and sharing best practices.

The Action Plan also recognises the need for improving occupation health and safety standards to adapt to new technological and societal changes while also protecting workers. It mentions psychosocial risks and work-related stress as issues that need to be better addressed to protect the well-being of workers and ensure labour productivity. In this sense, the Action Plan commits the European Commission to present in the second quarter of 2021 a new Occupational Safety and Health Strategic Framework for 2021-2027.

Despite some questions about the amount of ambition for certain objectives, the Action Plan holds the EU accountable for implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights and creating a more Social Europe. In the next weeks, Mental Health Europe (MHE) will present a more detailed analysis of the Action Plan to outline opportunities, gaps and inform members on how they can benefit from as well as contribute to its implementation.