

MENTAL HEALTH EUROPE

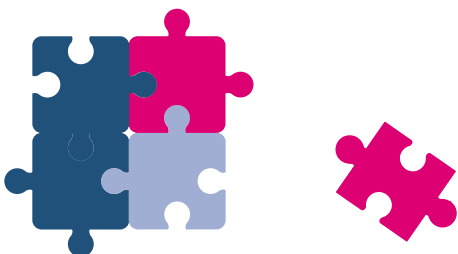
Membership Engagement and Development Strategy

2022-2025



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ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH EUROPE

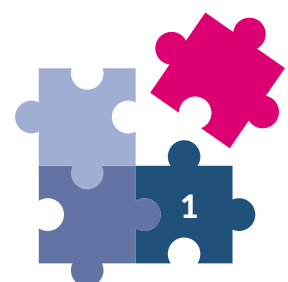
Mental Health Europe (MHE) is a European non-governmental network organisation whose mission is to lead in advancing a human-rights, community-based, recovery-oriented and psychosocial approach to mental health and well-being for all.

MHE currently represents 74 organisations in 33 European countries and 35 individual members.

To carry out this mission, MHE is committed to supporting a strong membership facilitating the synergy of diverse organisations and the active participation of people with lived experience. MHE aims to provide space and opportunities for member organisations to develop capacity, learn from one another, share resources and develop common strategies and actions.

MHE operates according to the following **values**:

- **Dignity and Human Rights** – promoting the inherent dignity, uniqueness, and right to self-determination of all persons.
- **Person-centredness, Independence & Autonomy** – shaping mental health and wellbeing policies, services and support around people’s demands and choices.
- **Solidarity** – fostering a culture of equality, inclusion and social justice.
- **Innovation** – pioneering new paths and narratives in advancing mental health and well-being.
- **Independence** – operating free from undue commercial influence from health-related industries and from political or religious beliefs.
- **Co-creation** – experts by experience, their supporters, service providers and other actors working together on an equal basis and valuing the essential knowledge each contributes.
- **Collaboration** – working constructively with MHE members and all stakeholders, including experts by experience and their supporters, policy- and decision-makers, service providers, researchers.



MHE works towards contributing to the following **changes**:

- substantial improvement in the recognition and adherence to the human rights perspective in mental health-related policies and practices across Europe;
- increased adoption of the psychosocial model in mental health promotion and care;
- improved availability of and access to equitable, recovery-oriented high-quality mental health services in the community;
- experts by experience, their supporters and peer networks are active actors in co-creation;
- reduced mental health stigma and discrimination at all levels of society;
- Strengthened MHE organisational sustainability and impact.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to all organisations and individuals based in Europe that are active or interested in the field of mental health and underwrite the Statutes and Internal Rules of the Association.

The Association has 3 membership categories:

Full members

Full members are national, regional, and local organisations that are established in Europe and that are primarily active in the field of mental health in Europe. They must have legal status in compliance with the laws and customary practices in their own country.

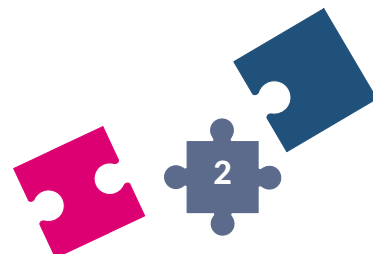
Supporting members

Supporting members must comply with one or several of the following criteria:

- be an association or organisation that is partially active in the field of mental health;
- be an association or organisation that is active in the field of a single mental health issue;
- be a professional association, research or training institution that is active in the field of mental health;
- be a European association that is active in the field of mental health.

Individual members

Any natural person active or interested in mental health, who wants to support MHE-SME. Representatives (staff, volunteers) of entities that are eligible for full or supporting membership cannot apply for individual membership.



MEMBERSHIP ADDED VALUE

“Why should you join Mental Health Europe?”

Intelligence

MHE keeps members abreast of all policy and legislative developments at EU and international levels on mental health and of key initiatives and resources that come into play.

MHE shares regular information making it comprehensible and relevant to the members' work.

Bridge to European decision-making

Due to the unique relationship with European decision makers, EU and non-EU institutions, MHE ensures the voice and concerns of its members are heard in the EU and beyond:

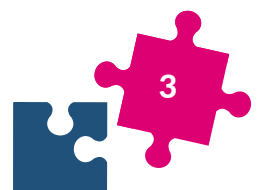
- Facilitated access to European policy and decision-makers
- Opportunities to contribute to policy development processes at European level
- Opportunities to liaise with European stakeholders providing access to a very diverse pool of expertise

MHE has established Mental Health Europe's Coalition for Mental Health and Wellbeing in the European Parliament, which gathers Member of the European Parliament (MEPs) committed to the inclusion of mental health in all policies.

Mental health in all policies

MHE is member of other European networks – the European Patients' Forum, the European Public Health Alliance, the European Social Platform and the European Disability Forum -and has partnership and coalitions with a high number of NGOs working in different areas where mental health is relevant.

Through these collaborations MHE is in the position to influence policies that have an impact on mental health though even if they are not directly linked to it, and to advance the mainstreaming of mental health in all policies.



A bottom-up participatory approach

The participation of communities and individuals is fundamental to make sure that grass-root realities feed our policy-making and evidence-building, so that we can in turn feed this into other dimensions of the our work. MHE members actively engage through thematic task forces and standing committees.

Capacity Building

Members have the opportunity to participate in meetings (2 annual meetings), conferences, workshops and training sessions to support their capacity building. MHE also provides ad-hoc briefings and advocacy guidance for members to support and advance their work.

Communication & Resources

Members are offered many opportunities to exchange ideas, experiences, learning and good practices. MHE also shares updates on events, good practices, reports, research, tools, and studies that can be relevant to their work.

Visibility

MHE shares members' successes and achievements and showcases them. In order to put the members under the spotlight, we find speaking opportunities at key events, integrate members' information into the website, promote members' activities and actively disseminate resources developed by members.

STRATEGY PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

This membership strategy aims at ensuring that MHE optimally serves the needs of its members. Developed in alignment with the MHE's Strategic Plan 2022-2025, this document aims to identify challenges and propose solutions for the strengthening and expansion of MHE's membership.

More specifically, the membership strategy aims to:

- Strengthen members' engagement with MHE and among each other;
- Develop and strengthen MHE network and members' capacity;
- Facilitate cooperation among members in joint initiatives – policy, projects, campaigns;
- Bridge the work undertaken in a European context with members' work at national and local levels.



IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

The strategy will be implemented via annual action plans detailing specific strategies and actions.

It will be evaluated also on annual basis according to indicators established in the annual plans. The Members will be involved in this evaluation. A more thorough review of the strategy will be done mid-term at the end of 2023.

OWNERSHIP

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

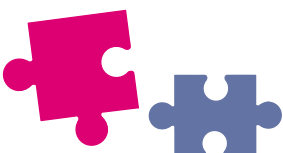
“WE” VS “THEY”, THE PROBLEM OF OWNERSHIP

Ownership is often a critical point when it comes to European membership organisations, in particular when a Secretariat with staff is in place and the number of members continues to grow.

The “We vs They” dynamic usually triggers one that reduces the “network organisation” to the “Secretariat” (“They”) while the member organisations do not consider themselves fully part of the network entity (“We”). Risk factors for a lack of ownership include the physical distance between a European Network Secretariat and its members (typically Brussels vs. the rest of Europe), communication and/or language barriers, the lack of regular contacts. Developing, maintaining and strengthening a sense of ownership amongst its members will be an ongoing key priority for MHE. As part of this strategy, it will be essential to put in place the right mechanisms so that the members really “feel part of a family” and have the necessary confidence and means to actively engage.

HETEROGENEITY OF MEMBERS

Although members adhere to MHE’s mission, objectives and values when joining the network, there is a certain diversity between the members that need to be acknowledged and addressed. Members have different profiles and roles; moreover, their size, resources, expertise and skills are also diverse.



MHE needs to take these aspects into account when designing strategies and practices to engage members into the work of the network and to provide targeted support and capacity building. Different organisations, with different needs and different skills, will (at times) need a more customised approach.

SPELLING OUT THE ADDED-VALUE OF MEMBERSHIP

“Why should you join MHE?”

The added value of being a MHE member must be clear and visible for members themselves as well as for stakeholders outside the organisation. This point is crucial to maintain the engagement of existing members and to recruit new members with the right profile and motivation to contribute to MHE’s work.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

MHE members receive several benefits from their membership, as described in the section on added value. It is equally important that members are aware that membership also brings responsibilities and expectations. These are spelt out in the membership application documentation and members formally commit to them. The strategy should devise approaches to uphold members’ commitment and ensure a two-way mutually beneficial relationship.

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

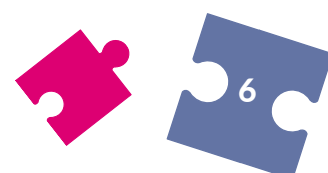
CREATION OF MEMBERS PROFILES & DATABASE

The Member Profile has a two-fold purpose:

Internal use: this is for the benefit of the Secretariat and the member organisations. It will record elements like mission, scope of activities, thematic expertise, contact person/people and contact information, participation to MHE’s bodies (i.e. Board, task forces).

It can potentially be used by the Secretariat for:

- strengthening the knowledge and resources sharing and peer-to-peer support within the membership;



- requesting input for MHE's work on issues/topics where a certain member has specific expertise;
- identification of speakers/moderators for events;
- development of project proposals to a) show MHE's collective expertise and b) involve members in projects;
- redirecting enquiries received by MHE to members as per relevance;
- having clarity on who the member contact person/people are (if more than one is in charge of different issues in the relation to MHE's work).

External use: this is for the benefit of external audiences and it will be outlined in the Members' section of MHE's website. It will record elements like scope of activities, membership, thematic expertise, participation in EU projects.

It will be useful for:

- increasing visibility of members;
- facilitating reach out from stakeholders interested in working with organisations with specific expertise and/or geographical coverage.

DEVELOPING A MEMBERSHIP GUIDE

The purpose of the guide will be to give an overview of MHE's activities, describe in concrete terms the added value of joining the network, the membership application criteria and procedure, and what is expected of members. The guide will also be used as a tool to attract new members.

INDUCTION FOR NEW MEMBERS

Despite the information that will have been made available through the membership guide and other resources, newly joined members may still have enquiries. An induction meeting will be organised when new members join MHE so as to provide more in-depth information.

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

We need to hear from members what is working well for them, what could be improved and get suggestions. Carrying out a membership survey on a regular basis will help us assess the members perspective and will contribute shaping the activities destined to members.



DIRECT LINE TO MHE

MHE Head of Operations (HoO) will be the lead in working with the members on engagement and capacity-building. To enhance regular contacts between MHE Secretariat and the members, the HoO will set up a weekly Member Drop-In Chat (via an online call link) during which members can reach out without previous notice. Members will have the opportunity to raise any issues they may have in relation to their membership.

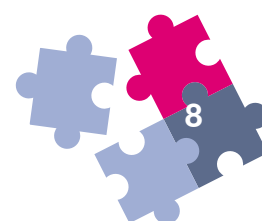
AN ENGAGED & ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

COMMUNICATION

Communication issues mainly relate to the following:

- Communications and resources produced by MHE are mostly in English since this is the official spoken language of the network. Translation in multiple European languages would significantly facilitate more involvement of different representatives of members and increase dissemination and visibility of MHE's work at national level.
- Shared understanding of language: MHE is very keen on consistently using terminology that reflects its specific approach to mental health. Discussions have previously taken place amongst the membership to agree on terms and wording on key concepts. However, these are not well known to all members, more terms need to be discussed and agreed and in some cases, they also need to be contextualised according to culture, stakeholder perspectives and national circumstances in countries.
- Digital means of communication: MHE has been increasingly relying on digital tools to run events and campaigns. Not everyone within the membership may be up to date with these new tools. Thus, these innovations that are meant to facilitate interaction may actually represent a barrier for some.
- Jargon from the "Brussels Bubble": policy-related language at European level can be at times be challenging for organisations that do not usually operate in the European environment. MHE already undertakes to make policy communications members-friendly. There is however space for improvement and MHE should look into innovative ways of delivering this type of communications.
- MHE newsletters can be overwhelming especially since members also receive newsletters from other organisations.



KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

- MHE website Library section is difficult to navigate; thus, further complicating the access to resources.
- The library could be further populated by adding resources developed by members.
- The materials produced by MHE could be more concrete in terms of topics and content developed. Moreover, they should be as easy-to-read as possible.

STANDING COMMITTEES & TASK FORCES

Standing Committees are permanent bodies dealing with ongoing business of the network. Currently, MHE has three committees dealing with finance, membership, and human rights.

Task Forces (TFs) deal with specific topics and may prepare MHE position papers; gather expertise and evidence in specific areas; submit ideas for project applications and support MHE's work on specific issues.

Participants to both Committees and TFs are representatives from MHE membership; they are assigned based on an open application procedure. Although they receive support from the Secretariat, they are meant to be led and run by participating members themselves.

There is a certain variety in the extent to which members actively contribute to these bodies; the reasons for this can also be quite diverse. When engagement is low, it adds to the workload of the Secretariat and, ultimately makes the purpose of involving members via these bodies less meaningful.

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

GLOSSARY

MHE is very specific about the language used in communications as it has to reflect our approach based on human rights and the psychosocial model. It is important for the whole membership to have a common understanding and own the language. To this purpose, a detailed glossary will be co-created in cooperation with the members. The glossary will also be translated in all the European languages spoken within the MHE membership. Translations will not only relate to the language itself but will also contextualise certain terms according to the national culture and specifics related to mental health.



TRANSLATIONS

MHE will purchase software that has proven to provide good quality translations. Given that a review and proof editing of these translations will still be needed; MHE will dedicate a specific budget to finance its members for finalising the translations.

DIGITAL LITERACY

Capacity to use digital forms of communications will be assessed as part of the annual membership survey so that appropriate means of support can be put in place. These may be for example training on how to use social media and testing of online meeting facilities before an event is planned.

USER FRIENDLY MATERIALS & POLICY COMMUNICATIONS

MHE Secretariat will pay particular attention in simplifying language and complementing it with a glossary for all policy-related communication targeting the members. We will also look into using more often videos and infographics for communications.

NEWSLETTERS

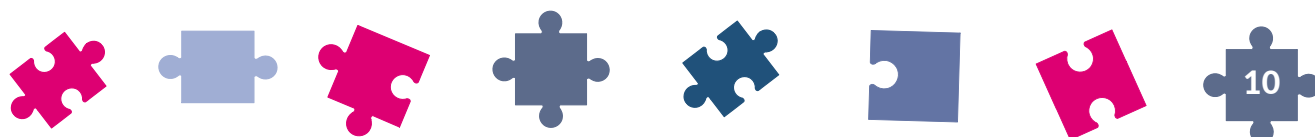
In both newsletters – the monthly one and the Members Digest – a content section will be added so that members can have a quick overview and select links to the sections that interest them.

WEBSITE LIBRARY SECTION

This section will be optimised and improved by adding more search options and filters. A new section for resources developed by the members will also be added.

REINFORCING THE ROLE OF TASK FORCES

This section will be optimised and improved by adding more search options and filters. The planning of the work of the TFs will be more aligned to the annual work plan of MHE. Each TF will assess the annual work plan and agree on the tasks to be carried out during the year. Moreover, a six-month internal evaluation will be done by the members of the TF to assess what is working well and what could be improved.



VISITS TO MEMBERS

In order to better know the members and the context in which they work, the Secretariat will plan visits by staff and/or Board representatives to members. Visits could be arranged in conjunction with the member General Assembly or another important event/meeting. The objective of these missions will also be to take stock of the reality of member organisations, their capacity and to define what services we can offer them accordingly. These missions should pave the way for stronger cooperation and galvanise less active members.

DEVELOPMENT & GROWTH

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

DIVERSE CAPACITY

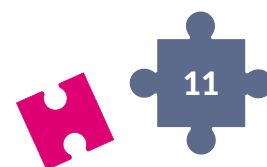
Capacity relates to different aspects: finances, human resources, knowledge of policy/technical issues, language issues, etc. However, there is currently no precise picture of the actual capacity and capacity-related issues of MHE's members. Having a clearer understanding will enable the Secretariat to know better the members and, thus, better tailor expectations and calls for contributions; provide support to members and design capacity activities and tools for members.

EXPERTISE

MHE has a very diverse membership including people with lived experience of mental health problems, their families and carers, service providers, professionals, academia and activists. This enables the network to bring together all various perspectives at European level.

This is not necessarily reflected at national level, since for example in country X we may have a member that is a service provider but no members with another different profile. This limits MHE's capacity to fully translate the scope of its work at country level; how could we ask a service provider to run an advocacy campaign? This would neither be their remit nor their expertise. Similarly, it would not be feasible to ask an academic member to bring the perspective of people with lived experience.

Bringing together these diverse and complementary perspectives also at national level is in fact very important to:



- establish better cooperation at country level;
- strengthen the reach of our messages;
- provide an awareness of the different perspectives and the expertise that each perspective brings to co-creation;
- increase visibility and outreach of MHE's and members' work and outcomes.

GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

There are a few European countries where MHE has no members; furthermore, in some countries, the current members may not have a national structure. It is therefore important to continue searching for new members to ensure appropriate geographical coverage.

REPRESENTATION OF EXPERTS BY EXPERIENCE

MHE has a diverse membership and this diversity will be cherished and supported. Nonetheless, the voice and role of experts by experience need to be strengthened since they are the ultimate beneficiaries of MHE's work. We have to build on the good practices available and address gaps. Within this, we also need to look at better involvement of family, carers and supporters who also belong to the group of experts by experience.

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

EMBRACING SOLIDARITY AS AN ORGANISATIONAL VALUE

Different capacity often equals to different opportunities for members to be active within MHE despite their commitment to engage. MHE and its members can not only adopt solidarity as a value but also concretely promote it. Some forms of solidarity can be for instance:

- engaging as a coach or a mentor in the Members' Exchange Programme providing expertise and support;
- accepting that in some cases MHE will, after due diligence, reduce or waive temporarily the membership fee of members encountering financial challenges;
- contributing to own travel expenses for MHE events;
- giving time to another member organisation to support them on an ad-hoc basis.



MAPPING OF POTENTIAL MEMBERS

In order to expand both geographically and in relation to the expertise needed, the Secretariat, also with the help of members, will map potential members in all European countries. Current members will be consulted before organisations in their country are approached to explore interest for membership.

MEMBERS CAPACITY-NEEDS ASSESSMENT

This may be integrated into the annual membership survey or delivered via an ad-hoc survey. The purpose of this assessment is to identify the capacity needs of members in relation to:

- Governance
- Organisational management
- Advocacy
- Communication
- Funding

In order to advance:

- planning for capacity-building activities and resources for members – knowing the needs better will help us define what we can do to help;
- optimising opportunities for learning and exchanges between members – members can learn from each other;
- tailoring ad-hoc support in specific situations.

MEMBERS EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

This programme aims to enhance the sharing of expertise among MHE membership through:

- Study visits members-to-members: 6 MHE member organisations (per year) will visit for a few days another member organisation to learn about specific aspects of work. The objectives and focus of the visit will be agreed beforehand and approved by the MHE Secretariat.
- Coaching: members with solid expertise and resources in a specific area of work (e.g. working with youth, co-creation, etc.) will coach members who wish to develop capacity in that area. This involves regular online meetings and exchanges and a study visit (see previous activity).
- Mentoring: members with strong capacity will be mentoring members that need support in organisational development and other aspects of work (e.g. developing advocacy skills). This will be a long-term interaction (2-3 years) and involves regular online meetings and exchanges and a study visit (see previous activity).



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Accessing funding is one of the main challenges, particularly for a non-profit organisation. When it comes to EU funding, the difficulties in identifying information sources, in browsing the information and the complexity of the procedures to access EU funding can sometimes be disconcerting for organisations with limited expertise in the field.

MHE will help its members by disseminating information on funding opportunities, seeking opportunities to involve members in European projects developed by the Secretariat, facilitating joint projects by members, organising training dedicated to fundraising.

STRENGTHENING NETWORKING BETWEEN MEMBERS

- Six webinars per year will be organised and led by MHE members with support from the Secretariat. The topics will be proposed by and agreed with the membership based on a co-creation approach.
- Two European capacity-building events in hybrid format will be organised by the MHE Secretariat with the involvement of experts through a co-creation approach.
- Two national capacity-building events in a hybrid format will be organised by a national MHE member through a co-creation approach.

STRENGTHENING THE REPRESENTATION OF EXPERTS BY EXPERIENCE

- Assessment of current representation and participation of experts by experience and their supporters within MHE membership.
- Development of guidelines to support MHE members in recruiting and developing/strengthening the participation of experts by experience and their supporters.
- Training for members developed and implemented with a co-creation approach.
- Experience-sharing event for members.
- Establishment of formal cooperation between MHE and networks (European and national) representation experts by experience when membership is not possible.
- Assessment of the feasibility to put in place a special membership fee for organisations of people with lived experience with limited financial resources.
- Mainstreaming to the furthest extent possible the perspective of people with lived experience in MHE's work.

DEVELOPING CAPACITY IN CO-CREATION

It is MHE's core principle to value the insight and expertise brought by people with lived experience of mental health problems and their supporters. However, whereas supporting the empowerment of experts by experience is a must, this is not sufficient.

We will strive to achieve an increased capacity of all relevant actors to work together from A to Z valuing each other's expertise and competencies whatever their background.

Actions that we will undertake:

- establishment of an MHE Co-creation Task Force consisting of representatives of the diverse MHE membership;
- training for MHE staff and members in co-creation methodology;
- development of guidelines on co-creation in mental health.



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