

New report reveals flaws and human rights challenges in mental health systems across Europe

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Today, [Mental Health Europe](#) and the [University of Kent-Tizard Centre](#) launch their “**Mapping and Understanding Exclusion in Europe**” report, a unique study which looks at the state of mental health services across Europe (**35+ countries**) and provides exclusive data and testimonies about European mental health systems, ongoing human rights violations and the changes on the horizon.

Tens of thousands of people with mental health problems are living in psychiatric and other institutions in Europe today. At least 264,000 people live under full guardianship, isolated from society and deprived of the right to make choices which make up our everyday lives.

“Many of them are deprived of their most basic rights, have little control over their lives and face terrible abuses such as violence and the use of seclusion, restraint and forced treatment. Although there are some positive changes happening in some European countries, the findings of our report highlight some outdated practices in mental health systems across Europe” explains Nigel Henderson, President of Mental Health Europe.

The report shows that institutional care, the use of coercion, forced medication, loss of rights and reliance on involuntary hospitalisation of people living with mental ill health are not only a Central and Eastern European problem: countries in Western Europe (including France, Belgium, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Germany) still have mental health systems where treatment relies too much on confinement and where tens of thousands of people with mental health problems are still living in closed institutions.

The study also points to more modern and progressive approaches and successful examples of community based services. Although the state of mental health care remains uneven across Europe, potentially promising **reforms on legal capacity, guardianship laws and on the transition from institutions to community based-services are being implemented in 10+ countries**. According to the report, trends like austerity and migration were also issues that impacted upon services.

“The promising practices presented in the report should not be considered alternatives and should be placed at the centre of mental health systems” says Prof. Dr Dainius Puras, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to physical and mental health.

A unique feature of Mapping and Understanding Exclusion is that is the inclusion of the voices of people who have been forcibly treated. This chapter of the report helps people understand what coercive measures can do to a person, how isolating those experiences can feel and how it can impact upon their recovery.

“I believe it may have been harder for me to heal from the trauma of the hospitalisation rather than from the mental health issues themselves”. adds Sabrina Palumbo, who shared her testimony to affect change.

The report includes key recommendations for the EU going forward, and **urges the European Union to keep financing deinstitutionalisation post 2020, and extend funding to all EU Member States with institutional care and better monitor how its money is spent**. It also calls for more funding for **research on alternatives to coercion and recalls that EU member states have much to learn from each other**. The EU can and should promote exchange of information between countries to make sure the positive advances being made elsewhere can be learned from including through follow-up action to previous EU mental health initiatives.

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Notes to editor

- You can follow the livestream of the press conference on January 16h at 9.00AM CET [HERE](#)
- You can download the entire Mapping and Understanding Exclusion report [HERE](#)
- You can download the **individual country reports** and their translations [HERE](#)

Fiches available: *Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom.*

- The research was conducted with the help of hundreds of experts from mental health services, governments, researchers, national organisations, persons with lived experience of psychiatry and social workers from all over Europe and funded by the [Open Society Foundation \(OSF\)](#) and MHE's Operating Grant under the EU Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme.
- Figures shared are estimate.

About Mental Health Europe

Mental Health Europe is a European non-governmental network organisation committed to the promotion of positive mental health, the prevention of mental distress, the improvement of care, advocacy for social inclusion and the protection of the rights of (ex)users of mental health services, persons with psychosocial disabilities, their families and carers.: www.mhe-sme.org

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