



A vision for youth mental wellbeing in Europe

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Foreword



Gregory Renand
Head of the Z Zurich Foundation



Sarah Kline
CEO & Co-founder –
United for Global Mental Health

Young people are not just the future. They are an integral part of the present and essential members of the community. Their wellbeing affects us all, and it is our collective responsibility to support them. Fostering environments that promote youth mental wellbeing helps build a stronger, more resilient world for everyone, providing the foundation from which we can achieve other vital objectives like the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Consequently, investing in the mental wellbeing of young people is one of the most important decisions that communities and societies can make.

United for Global Mental Health takes a rights-based approach to advocating for political, financial and policy support for mental health. That includes the rights of young people, who are often overlooked or lumped in with adults despite their unique circumstances and needs.

Youth mental wellbeing is a key priority for the Z Zurich Foundation, which takes a prevention-, promotion- and impact-based approach. We partner with local and global organizations to help build a future where every young person is empowered with the tools, resources, and support systems to improve their mental wellbeing.

We believe Europe has a critical opportunity to act today on youth mental wellbeing at scale. Promoting resilience and wellbeing and destigmatizing youth mental health goes beyond changing minds and attitudes – which in itself is no easy task. It is about translating this shift into tangible actions: providing holistic support that involves educators, caregivers and peers; creating inclusive schools and workplaces that promote mental wellbeing and accommodate mental health needs; or implementing legal frameworks that protect the rights of young people facing mental health challenges. And it is about centering youth perspectives in policy and practice. Promoting youth mental wellbeing at scale requires a multifaceted approach for systemic change at community, country and European levels.

This report by the Z Zurich Foundation lays out a vision for a Europe that actively prioritizes the mental health and wellbeing of young people. It explores what is needed to achieve systemic change in Europe, whether at the level of regional institutions, national policy level, or elsewhere.

And this vision is within reach. The European Union now has in place laws like the Digital Services Act (DSA)¹ to curb technology's harms to young people's mental wellbeing and encourage it to deliver benefits. In 2023, the Commission committed €1.23 billion to support overall mental health activities.² This commitment to mental wellbeing must be translated into national policy and support other stakeholders to play their role. How might European countries make the most of their economic and cultural diversity, learning from each other and designing ways to promote youth mental wellbeing from many different angles?

This report aims to shed light on the landscape of youth mental wellbeing in Europe today and how we might best support it. It is a call to action for all of us — advocates, policymakers, educators, private and non-profit sectors, service providers, youth and community members — to come together and create a world where young people can thrive mentally, physically, and socially. Let us commit to making youth mental wellbeing a priority, not just in words but in actions that lead to lasting change.

Executive summary



Youth mental wellbeing in Europe: A positive future is within reach

Imagine a young person starting their day in the year 2030...

In a future Europe where mental wellbeing is a priority, 17-year-old Mia thrives in a supportive environment. At school, mindfulness practices and open discussions about mental wellbeing are integrated into daily life. Mia leans on a network of friends, teachers, and carers to manage stress and anxiety, even as society continues to grapple with pressing issues like climate change and conflict. Social media promotes healthy conversations, and in-person connections are the norm. Government policies back evidence-based initiatives in schools and communities, ensuring comprehensive support for youth through a blend of promotion and prevention and, for those that need it, accessible treatment. At home, her family also values the expression of her emotions, reinforcing a shared culture of care.

This vision might feel far away, but it is attainable. This whitepaper explores how different actors in Europe might drive momentum towards a future that emphasizes mental wellbeing, and why doing so is vital.

The mental wellbeing of European youth is in crisis, with significant costs for individuals and society

Youth mental wellbeing is critical to society and extends beyond treating issues as they arise, to thriving in a fulfilled life. It includes the emotional literacy and skills to identify when one is under stress and to advocate for oneself; the resilience to respond to life's ups and downs; strong relationships and social skills; and the ability to participate in and contribute to society.^{3,4}

But young people in Europe face an invisible crisis in mental health and wellbeing. More than 1 in 6 struggle with their mental health,⁵ and recent data suggests the situation is worsening⁶ after the COVID-19 pandemic which coincided with a doubling of depression rates among young people in several European countries.⁷ However, 49% of the young people in the European Union (EU) reported unmet needs in mental health care, compared to 23% of the adult population.⁸ Now, among European youth aged 15-19, suicide is the second leading cause of premature death.⁹

The crisis in youth mental health has significant economic and human costs. It contributes to lost productivity and can lead to school dropout, social isolation, strained family dynamics, and long-term social challenges.^{10,11,12,13,14} It not only harms young people's health, but the health of their caregivers and loved ones and the healthy functioning of communities and societies.¹⁵ OECD estimates suggest that the economic burden of mental health conditions in Europe amounts to as much as 4% of the EU's total GDP annually.¹⁶

Prevention and promotion are critical levers of systemic change in youth mental wellbeing

Addressing this crisis requires proactive strategies, and this is where prevention and promotion come into play. Promotion initiatives seek to create enabling environments that enhance psychological wellbeing, such as through improving emotional literacy and empowering youth to use positive coping mechanisms. Prevention focuses on identifying and mitigating risk factors for mental health conditions – for specific vulnerable groups or at a population level, addressing determinants of mental health challenges to minimize the onset of conditions.



Having these emotional wellbeing tools in your backpack makes you more resilient.

Each action we can take to promote students' wellbeing can have a big impact on their motivation and ability to overcome challenges. If you are more resilient you have a greater chance to succeed and be happier.

– Sandra Camós,
Director of Education,
Fundación Princesa de Girona

Increasingly, studies show that when these interventions are designed and delivered correctly, they can provide significant returns on investment. For example, one study showed that every Euro invested into mental wellbeing programs and early detection yielded €24 worth of returns by mitigating the negative economic impacts of mental health challenges on education, employment and savings.¹⁷

Increased attention by different stakeholders is driving new solutions to gaps in the current approach to mental wellbeing

We are not starting from zero in addressing this challenge. In fact, recent years have seen important developments and signals that governments, the private sector and other stakeholders are paying more attention to mental wellbeing.

The Z Zurich Foundation's approach to youth mental wellbeing

Mental wellbeing is a key priority for the Z Zurich Foundation, with 35 programs in 33 countries – at time of writing. Through a prevention-, promotion-, and impact-driven approach, the Foundation collaborates with national and global organizations to implement sustainable youth mental wellbeing programs at scale.

By engaging with the public, private, and non-profit sectors, the aim is to build a world in which every young person is empowered to speak about how they feel and is equipped with tools and support to promote mental wellbeing. As one of the leaders in the growing movement of philanthropic funders prioritizing and promoting mental wellbeing,¹⁸ in 2024, the Foundation donated more than €10 million to prevention and promotion programs, projecting to positively impact close to 4 million young people worldwide.

According to [Prospira Global's Power of Giving 2024 report](#), the Z Zurich Foundation ranks third in the annual list of the top reported global philanthropic funders focusing on mental health.

In 2023, the EU activated €1.23 billion overall for mental health, including elements of prevention and promotion, with several initiatives focused on young people. In October 2024, it further expanded funding to additional activities, like the EU Support Package on Stigma.¹⁹

While these investments are a promising start, gaps remain. Spending is a significant one: in 2018, the Lancet Commission recommended that high-income countries spend at least 10%, while low income countries spend at least 5% of healthcare expenditure on mental health, but analysis shows that most countries lag well behind this target.²⁰ Significant proportions of these budgets focus on treatment, leaving too little for in-community prevention and promotion programs that can have long-term positive impact for young people and wider society, or for the upskilling of teachers, caregivers and other stakeholders that are vital to scaling and maintaining promotion and prevention efforts.

Elsewhere, inconsistent and varied approaches to collecting and disseminating data hinder the ability of private and public actors to identify the best initiatives to support, as does the exclusion of young people and community stakeholders from the design of interventions. A blend of public, private, philanthropic and civil society support is needed to scale programs.

What would it take to bridge the gap?

Everyone – from European institutions, national and local governments, private and philanthropic funders, to educational institutions, parents and caregivers, and youth themselves – has a role to play in realizing a Europe in which the mental wellbeing of young people is a priority.

This whitepaper offers recommendations for these stakeholders and provides 14 case studies and resources demonstrating the potential of these actions for positive change. With this shared understanding of the challenge faced and the role each actor can play in addressing it, the positive vision of the future, where mental wellbeing is prioritized by all, becomes possible.

Here is a series of recommendations to be considered at different levels:

<p>All stakeholders</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rebalance prioritization and funding to support a range of targeted and universal prevention and promotion programs for all youth and the most vulnerable groups. • Invest in multidisciplinary, multistakeholder community-based approaches. • Identify context specific delivery mechanisms – e.g. education systems, sport networks, digital prevention campaigns – to create sustainable impact at scale. • Increase training and support for professionals and non-professionals who can play a role in supporting youth mental wellbeing. • Balance empowerment, resilience and destigmatization in programs and discussions about mental wellbeing. • Expand data collection on mental wellbeing, and recognize the value of different forms of data, metrics and evidence. • Explore collaboration and system-level changes opportunities across sectors to reach and impact a wider number of actors and young people.
<p>Institutions of the European Union, including the European Commission and Parliament</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a Europe-wide positive vision for a youth mental wellbeing to foster collective commitment. • Further serve as a center of excellence that can guide the actions of states and other actors. • Build on existing efforts to understand the influence of social media on mental wellbeing and take appropriate action. • Support the scaling or replication of existing national or local youth mental wellbeing initiatives to accelerate their impact.
<p>National and local governments</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate prevention and promotion of mental wellbeing in all areas of policymaking and government action - e.g., education, health, social affairs. • Address the drivers and root causes of stress, anxiety and other challenges, not only their symptoms. • Upskill national stakeholders' capacities to play their part in uplifting mental wellbeing. • Expand funding while simplifying processes for organizations supporting mental wellbeing to access it.
<p>Mental wellbeing programs and initiatives</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be guided by and drive the generation of high-quality evidence and best practices. • Build on existing programs utilizing the power of education, sport and digital campaigns – amongst other delivery mechanisms – to accelerate the design and implementation of similar impactful initiatives. • Strengthen partnerships between public, private, civil society and youth organizations to promote youth mental wellbeing at scale, increase impact collectively and coordinate actions in a sustainable way.

<p>Business and private funders</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support initiatives to scale and succeed, focusing on areas public finance cannot easily address. • Encourage and support programs to collect and share evidence of impact to accelerate the delivery of positive outcomes in similar settings. • Foster a wellbeing culture within private organizations and empower employees to promote youth mental wellbeing within their own teams and communities.
<p>Educational institutions</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embrace mental wellbeing as a core objective of education for youth to thrive at school and within their community. • Adopt a "mental wellbeing in all education" approach. • Ensure education systems are equipped with the needed resources and knowledge for all individuals – teachers, counsellors, parents, youth – to make youth mental health a priority in schools.
<p>Parents and caregivers</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equip themselves to best support young people and encourage others to do the same. • Become role models in expressing their emotions and helping adolescents to manage stress and anxiety. • Support a culture of self-care and peer-support, while empowering young people to ask for support whenever needed.
<p>Young people and youth-led organizations</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue advocating for the space and respect to be heard in conversations about youth. • Serve as role models and support for peers using proven approaches based on evidence. • Provide a continuous barometer of risk factors and identified solutions.

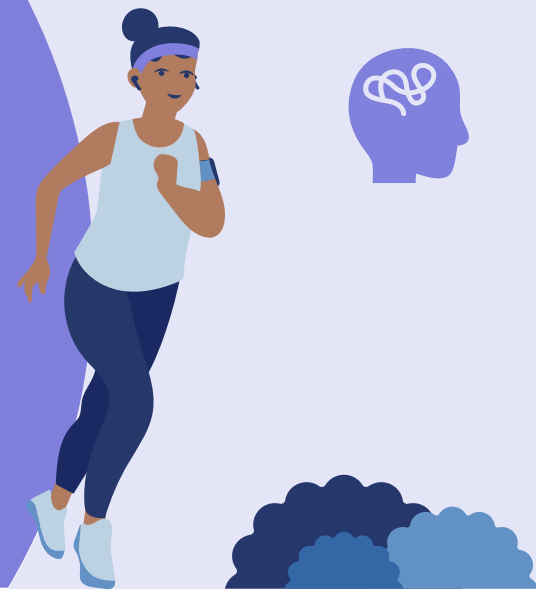
Why we developed this whitepaper

Prioritizing preventative approaches to youth mental wellbeing means not only building a mentally healthy Europe, but creating the foundation for an inclusive, cohesive, forward-thinking, thriving, and sustainable Europe. The European Commission has made progress through its 2023 *Comprehensive approach to mental health*, which recognizes the unique and valuable experience of young people. It is only the beginning of the shift that is needed.

The Z Zurich Foundation (the Foundation) has developed this whitepaper to outline a vision of a Europe in which mental wellbeing is prioritized, and to encourage an array of stakeholders to take action in bringing that vision to life. It is informed by expert interviews with a wide range of actors in the youth mental wellbeing space, as well as literature on the current state of youth mental health in Europe. While the focus of this whitepaper is the countries and stakeholders within the European Union, it holds space for diversity in all its forms and draws on best practices and case studies from around the world.

The Foundation has developed this report not to present a singular approach for preventing a greater youth mental health crisis, but rather to inform readers, empower them, and call for shared actions that build momentum toward a future Europe that promotes mental wellbeing for all youth.

1. A vision for youth mental wellbeing in Europe



The movement for mental wellbeing should have a positive outlook of the future we seek, even as we work with ground-level reality. This whitepaper opens with a vision for prioritizing youth mental wellbeing in Europe, presenting a North Star for stakeholders across sectors.

This future may feel improbably optimistic – but if everyone plays their part, it can be achieved. All stakeholders will need to work in concert, with a clear understanding of the specific role each can play and with shared objectives in mind. Over time, we can bring about a - local, national, European - systemic shift with tremendous benefits for all.

1.1 A system with mental wellbeing at its core

When the mental wellbeing of young people is a collective priority, it exists at the forefront of policy and is addressed together with other pressing social, economic and political issues. Mental wellbeing is centered in policies ranging from the adaptation of national secondary school curricula to digital prevention campaigns and initiatives to protect young people online. Greater prioritization – by governments and institutions, civil society and the private sector, caregivers and young people themselves – leads to better promotion and prevention, early intervention, and sustained support. Coordinated efforts among schools, healthcare systems, and communities, informed by health experts and youth advocates, ensures that no young person falls through the cracks.

In this future, budgets for youth mental health and wellbeing are on a par with budgets dedicated to other major public health issues. Resources are efficiently allocated by the EU to member states to catalyze other public funding. Private-sector funding supplements these budgets and drives innovation.

Shifting away from the scarcity mindset that has plagued youth mental health for decades, funds are more evenly distributed. No longer are funders under pressure to dedicate limited resources only to treatment. Instead, a range of prevention and promotion programs with integrated approaches and complementary impacts are built and delivered.

Schools, communities, and health systems are equipped with the necessary tools and trained personnel to deliver wellbeing initiatives and mental health promotion services whenever needed. Research and data collection for prevention and promotion are also adequately funded, enabling continuous improvement of mental health strategies based on evidence and lessons learnt. Prevention and promotion initiatives have become the greatest forms of protection for young people.

Mental health experts and caregivers are highly trained and equipped with the latest tools and knowledge, allowing them to build safe spaces and provide nuanced guidance to young people and their support networks. Professionals collaborate across borders and sectors, sharing best practices and research to create unified, effective, and evidence-based approaches to wellbeing. Professionals work alongside parents, educators, sport coaches, community leaders, healthcare providers, peers, private actors and civil society organizations to weave comprehensive and preventative networks.

Advocacy has taken a leading role in raising awareness for youth mental wellbeing and create partnerships to elevate impact at scale. Governments, educational institutions, healthcare systems, civil society organizations, and the private sector have listened. Clear narratives using quantitative and qualitative data convey the gravity of youth mental health issues, but also encourage optimism and support for a wellbeing-centered future and the implementation of impactful programs at scale.

The result is a Europe that promotes mental wellbeing, built on a foundation of trust: young people are confident that their support systems will take their mental wellbeing and struggles seriously. Support systems place confidence in young people, trusting that their aspirations are real and that they will advocate for themselves. Funders trust that their resources are used in the most impactful way possible, and experts trust that their expertise is valued. Stakeholders from all sectors demonstrate a sincere willingness to address these gaps, understanding that it is not just a matter of health, but of equity, social justice, resilience, and economic prosperity for all.

1.2 A day in the life of Mia

In a future Europe where mental wellbeing is a priority, 17-year-old Mia begins her Monday morning with a sense of calm and security, knowing that her wellbeing is taken seriously by everyone around her. When she arrives at school, posters line the walls reminding students that not only is it okay to talk about their feelings, but necessary. Mia doesn't need the reminder anymore, but it's important for the new younger students. Mia knows high school is more than just a place for academics, but a hub for mental health conditions prevention and wellbeing promotion. She feels a sense of pride, knowing that she too has a role to play.

Her teachers, who were out last Friday for their bi-annual mental health training, mingle in the hallway, greeting the students and each other with genuine warmth and interest. Each day, Mia has a mindfulness practice integrated into her morning schedule – some days, it's ten minutes of journaling with a prompt, while on other days the class might simply sit outside in the sun for a deep breathing exercise and five-minute check-in with a buddy. It's a part of the curriculum, just as important as math or science. One of the school counselors reminds the class about the resources available to everyone. When Mia feels her social anxiety, exam stress and loneliness creep back in, she leans on these resources, her friends, counselors, teachers, and sports team for support. She knows that no one person – including herself – carries the weight of her mental health struggles; instead, responsibility is shared across a network of care.

During lunch, Mia sits with her friends in the courtyard. They chat openly about everything, including mental health, without fear of judgment. A recent social media campaign, crafted by students with inputs from mental health professionals, encouraged this openness. New social media principles limit the ways in which online platforms and unfriendly users infiltrate Mia's life, and in-person connection is the default among Mia and her friends; however, social media platforms are still powerful forums for advocacy, sharing, and connection for young people across Europe and the world. Mia's friend mentions that he's been feeling stressed about an upcoming exam, and another friend shares some techniques she learned from a trusted content creator to help calm these feelings. They talk about it as easily as they discuss new movies or weekend plans.

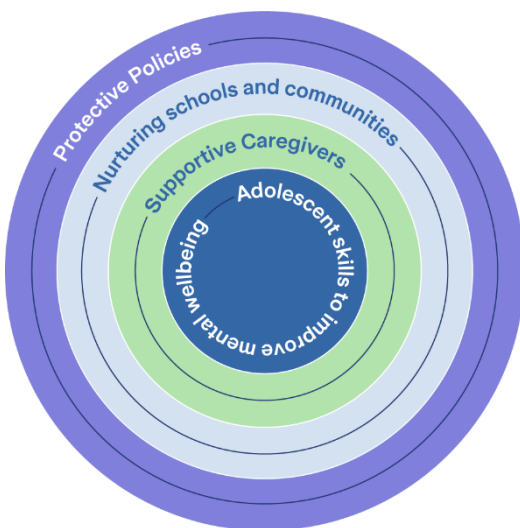
After classes finish for the day, Mia bikes to her younger brother's school where she volunteers as a football coach for a program designed to support children's wellbeing through sports. Without realizing it, these middle schoolers are practicing mindfulness techniques along with dribbling, passing and shooting. As a mentor, Mia role-models mindfulness, openness and vulnerability, and fosters a culture of support and open dialogue.



When Mia and her brother arrive home after practice, her parents check in with them and they do the same. Mia tells them about a disagreement with a friend and her upcoming mid-term tests. Her parents are part of a local community group that regularly meets to discuss how to support their teens and tweens' mental wellbeing; they know that one of the best ways to support Mia's mental wellbeing is to support their own. They trust that the systems and spaces around them — from work to school to community health centers — are designed to share the burden of care.

In her journal before bed, Mia reflects on the sense of trust she felt today. Trust in her school to be a safe and supportive environment, trust that it is also ok not to not always be ok, trust in the healthcare system to take care of her mental health needs, and trust in herself to navigate the challenges of adolescence with the tools and support she's been given. She knows and highly values that she lives in a Europe where her mental wellbeing is a priority for all.

The system-level change we want to see for Mia



The aim to support the mental wellbeing of young people centers around **protective policies, nurturing school and community environments** that promote mental wellbeing and decrease stigma, the presence of **connected and supportive caregivers**, and the cultivation of resilience in **adolescents**. These are the foundations of a healthier future for youth and generations to come.

Source: UNICEF & Z Zurich Foundation partnership's system change ambition





2. Creating a shared understanding

Concepts and research that are central to this report

2.1 Mental wellbeing is a broader issue that goes beyond mental health

The mental health and wellbeing space is filled with a significant number of terms and concepts, not all of them clearly defined. Because of the diversity of associated languages and cultural concepts, understanding common terms and distinctions is critical to engaging with the nuances of this matter.

While the term “**mental wellbeing**” is often used interchangeably with “mental health”, distinguishing them is important. According to the WHO, mental wellbeing is a broader, more holistic way of understanding a person’s ability to live a fulfilled life – based on their view of themselves, the strength of their relationships, their participation in and contribution to society, both economically and socially, and much more beyond simply the absence of an illness.^{21,22} Generally, better mental wellbeing results in better mental health. Mental wellbeing encompasses more than just the absence of mental health challenges – it includes psychological, and social welfare, together with abilities to positively address emotional challenges.



We need to make people understand that mental health, like physical health, is not the absence of disorder. You can live without a mental disorder diagnosis and still have poor mental health.

–Dr Daniel Rijo,
Associate Professor,
University of Coimbra

2.2 Promotion and prevention programs are critical for youth mental wellbeing

Key features of mental wellbeing prevention and promotion include dispelling stigmas (e.g. recognizing that “it’s ok to not be ok”), building skills to manage stress and anxiety and increase resilience, while promoting concrete steps that can improve wellbeing like increasing emotional literacy and positive behaviors.

Prevention and promotion initiatives can be **targeted** or **universal** in terms of their audiences. Targeted efforts focus on specific groups, typically that are more at risk or made more vulnerable in a given setting. Universal initiatives aim to benefit everyone, recognizing the necessity for all young people to understand their emotions and be empowered to seek support whenever needed. Prevention and promotion can be delivered via a range of channels and settings such as schools, sport clubs, digital solutions, peer-to-peer initiatives, ambassadors’ programs, community associations, and other spaces depending on the needs of the audience.

Prevention focuses on identifying and mitigating both the risk factors and the determinants for mental health conditions to minimize their onset. Ultimately, prevention addresses such conditions before they develop. When widely implemented, it has the potential to substantially reduce the number of people with mental health conditions and in turn ease the strain on treatment, recovery services, and public health budgets.

Prevention efforts vary proportionally to the target audience and context they are implemented in. For example, the establishment of a peer-to-peer support system for adolescents who have experienced displacement is a targeted preventative measure based on a specific determinant.²³

Promotion involves creating enabling environments that enhance psychological wellbeing. For example, a universal promotion strategy through education could build youth emotional literacy, leverage emotional intelligence, and support the development of positive coping strategies. Young people would practice how to recognize and manage their feelings, offer each other support, and seek help when needed. Promotion also includes creating supportive environments that encourage open dialogue about emotions and mental health conditions, similar to conversations about physical health challenges. Making young people feel comfortable discussing wellbeing helps reduce stigma and thereby increases the likelihood youth will seek support for any struggles before a crisis point is reached and treatment interventions may become necessary.

These interventions can have a system-wide impact through the direct involvement of public and private organizations, young people and caregivers. By building community-wide literacy and reducing stigma at scale, the majority of youth mental wellbeing programs have found that these benefits extend beyond their direct recipients into the wider communities that they are a part of. For example, adapting a public secondary school education system with mental wellbeing content will impact both adolescents and society as a whole.

Prevention and promotion are backed by growing recognition of the economic efficiency of these approaches. One study showed that every Euro invested into mental wellbeing programs or early detection yields €24 worth of returns by mitigating the negative economic impacts of mental health challenges on education, employment and savings.²⁴ A UNICEF study into the effectiveness of school-based interventions found a global benefit to cost ratio of \$225 to \$1 for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs.²⁵ However, despite this evidence, prevention and promotion programs currently receive far less attention than treatment from funders and governments. Redressing this balance to protect young people at scale is a key objective of the Z Zurich Foundation, and a central call-to-action of this report.



We serve young people, but they also go home, and they change the thought processes of their parents, which in turn changes the thought processes of their colleagues. We've done community wide surveys of people we haven't directly worked with and [we find] our work has impacted their perspective on mental health.

Diana Chao,
Founder, Letters to Strangers

2.3 Promoting youth mental wellbeing is key to addressing the wider mental health crisis

Who do we mean when we say “youth”, and why is this group important?

In the youth mental health and wellbeing landscape, the terms ‘youth’, ‘young people’, and ‘adolescents’ are used loosely with little consensus on which ages fall within each term. The United Nations defines ‘youth’ as anyone between the ages of 15-24.²⁶ The World Health Organization (WHO) defines adolescence as a period within ‘youth’ characterized by rapid developmental changes biologically and socially, as the ages between 10 and 19.²⁷

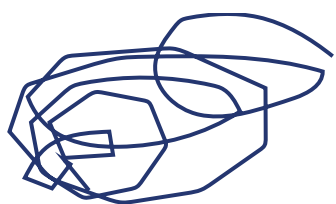
In this report ‘young people’ are defined primarily as those between ages 13-24. In Europe, individuals in this age group are likely to experience similar circumstances, such as secondary and tertiary education, shared emotional experiences, and similar processes of biological development.

Why is this significant? Young people are particularly at risk of, and impacted by, mental wellbeing challenges. Evidence shows that approximately half of mental health conditions emerge by the age of 14, and 75% of them develop by the age of 24.²⁸ Age ranges and boundaries can impact young people's ability to access care, whether receiving support from appropriately-trained providers or obtaining financial coverage through insurance or other benefits.²⁹



The brain undergoes major development from adolescence into the mid-20s and this is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. This is also when we see an increase in emergence of mental health conditions. However, services, laws, policies often operate from a binary approach to childhood and adulthood, with little consideration for the unique needs during this critical transition phase.

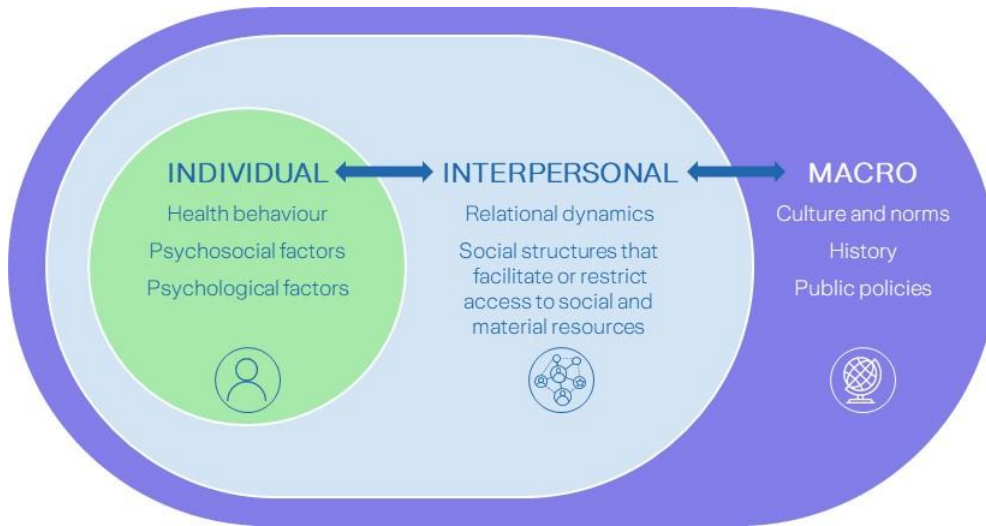
– Joanna Lai,
Health Specialist, Maternal Newborn,
Adolescent, Child Health Unit,
UNICEF NYHQ



What factors affect youth mental wellbeing?

Understandings of what can support mental wellbeing or contribute to mental health challenges in young people have evolved significantly in recent decades. For young people, mental wellbeing can become compromised by an interplay of individual, interpersonal, and macro factors.

Figure 1: A framework for nested levels of influence in a socioecological approach to health. Adapted from McLeroy et. al., 1988. Accessed [here](#).



Individual factors

Health & lifestyle behaviors: Lifestyle choices and behaviors are often closely linked with higher rates of youth mental health challenges, either as determinants or consequences. For example, substance abuse is a primary predictor of mental healthcare referrals³⁰. Lack of sleep is significantly associated with a range of mental health conditions,³¹ while physical activity and good physical health provide substantial positive benefits to mental wellbeing.³² A growing body of research also shows strong correlations between social media use and a range of mental health conditions.³³

Physiological factors: Youth is a physiologically tumultuous time. Some young people are predisposed to mental health challenges due to physiological and genetic factors,³⁴ while hormonal and biological changes that occur during adolescence can significantly increase the likelihood of experiencing them.³⁵ In addition, neurological developmental disorders and their impacts, such as loneliness, further elevate these risks.³⁶

While some risks during youth are consistent, there is considerable variation according to gender. Young women are more likely to experience common mental health disorders, including being twice as likely to experience depression.³⁷ However, young men are more likely to die by suicide,³⁸ and are less likely to self-report or contact mental health services.³⁹

Sarah Kline, CEO and Co-founder of United for Global Mental Health, on individual factors affecting mental health

“Young people confront a wide range of challenges for which mental health support is vital.

Young parents, particularly teenage mothers and fathers, are among those with greatest needs for mental health support.⁴⁰ Screening for mental health needs among young parents is of critical importance - for both them and their children.

Young people who are living with a communicable (e.g., HIV) or non-communicable disease (e.g., cancer) should also be offered mental health support as they go through the difficult processes of diagnosis, treatment and recovery.⁴¹

Experimenting with drugs or alcohol puts young people at greater risk of mental ill-health. And substance use disorders can lead to social stigma and prompt feelings of isolation and acute anxiety among young people.”

Interpersonal factors

Social and environmental factors, from family dynamics to social interactions in person and online, are critical in shaping young people's mental health. **Significant transitions**, such as moving from school to university, often involve sudden changes that can trigger mental health conditions.^{42, 43} **Family dynamics** can undermine a young person's wellbeing if they are unstable, while conversely supportive environments and caregivers can provide essential protection.⁴⁴ **Bullying** in real-life and, increasingly, in online spaces, can have a profound negative impact on mental wellbeing, heightening young people's risk of developing anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other mental health issues.⁴⁵ This risk is heightened among minority groups such as LGBTQ+ groups.⁴⁶

Macro factors

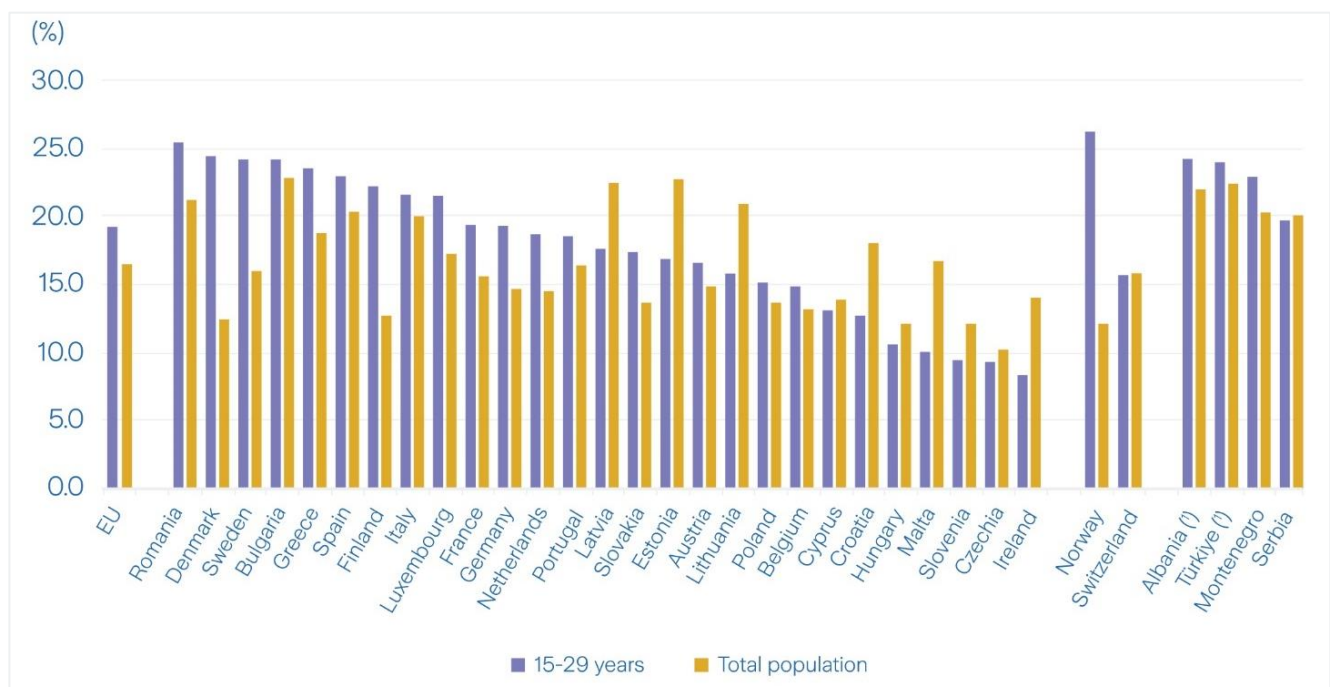
Global, large-scale systemic issues form the backdrop for youth mental health challenges. A 2023 study found that distress related to the **COVID-19 pandemic** had the strongest effect on depression, anxiety, and overall health-related quality of life in adolescents; causing a 22% increase in loneliness in the EU and a 25% increase in anxiety and depression worldwide.⁴⁷ In Iceland, Sweden and Norway, over 1 in 3 young people reported symptoms of depression during the pandemic, compared to 1 in 9 before COVID.⁴⁸

Socioeconomic and systemic factors including limited access to resources, poverty, and job instability are also key causes of youth mental health conditions. **Job instability and precarious work** contribute to financial instability and stress, exacerbating youth mental health challenges.⁴⁹ Similarly, young people growing up in **poverty** experience higher levels of chronic stress, depression, and other issues.⁵⁰ In the UK, a study following participants over time found that young people growing up in poverty are four times more likely to develop mental health conditions than their peers from high-income families.⁵¹

These connections are critical, given that, in Europe, one in four young people and one in five employed young people live in poverty, while one in four of them are on a precarious work contract.^{52, 53} The situation varies across EU member states. In 2022, the highest levels of young people at risk of poverty or social exclusion were in Romania (37.9%), Bulgaria (32.4%) and Greece (30.7%), while the lowest rates were found in the Czech Republic (10.5%), Slovenia (10.7%) and Malta (11.0%).⁵⁴

Figure 2: According to EuroStat, the proportion of young people at risk of poverty is higher than for the adult population in many EU countries. Source: EuroStat. n.d. Young people – Social exclusion. Access [here](#).

Share of persons at risk of poverty, 2022



Moreover, countries like Italy and Spain experience high levels of youth unemployment rates, with 22% and 25% respectively.⁵⁵ This situation adversely affects young people's mental wellbeing, since prolonged unemployment can lead to financial instability and stress, as well as delaying life milestones, such as moving out or starting a family, and hindering career development.

Likewise, being disengaged from education can lead to job instability and precarious work, contributing to poor youth mental wellbeing. In 2023, the share of young people aged 15-29 not in education, employment or training (NEET) across EU member states ranged from 19.3% in Romania and 16.1% in Italy, and 5.7% in Sweden.⁵⁶

Ethnic minorities are also more likely to struggle with mental health challenges, partly due to higher rates of poverty, coupled with the negative effects of discrimination they might experience.⁵⁷

Climate-related distress also has a consistent impact, contributing to young peoples' feelings of helplessness and despair: a 2024 survey by the European Commission found that 45% of youth reported that their feelings related to climate change harmed their day-to-day functioning.⁵⁸ In some cases, climate impacts directly cause displacement, degradation and disruption, whether short- or long-term.⁵⁹

War-related distress, particularly from the Russia-Ukraine conflict, was primarily linked to increased anxiety.⁶⁰ This effect is much more prevalent among the over 13 million refugees in Europe.⁶¹ The WHO found that individuals with a refugee background who reported a sense of isolation were 19.5 times more likely to have depressive symptoms.⁶² This is compounded by the fact that they are less likely to have access to the already limited support resources.⁶³

Strengthening the mental wellbeing of Ukrainian young refugees in Europe

At the onset of the Ukraine conflict, UNICEF, the Z Zurich Foundation and the Zurich Insurance Company launched a partnership in Poland and Italy to address the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing needs for young refugees from Ukraine. The aim was to meet immediate challenges and also contribute to the long-term mental wellbeing of affected adolescents, their families and communities through prevention and promotion activities.

In Poland, the online platform Learning Passport was launched in June 2023 in partnership with the Ministry of Education. It supports the development of complementary teaching skills to better support Ukrainian students. within the Polish education system and strengthen the socio-emotional skills of all students. Learning Passport is now integrated into the national system for professional teacher development. This is accessible to 50,000 teachers nationally.

In Italy, while the program initially focused on refugee youth from Ukraine, it evolved to address the mental wellbeing needs of all displaced young people. It became essential to support the collective needs of the entire refugee population to foster social cohesion and equity. The partnership program primarily focuses on promoting mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of adolescent refugees through in-person and online activities, while coordinating broader system responses for migrants and refugees.

Key activities in Italy include training and e-learning for both specialized and non-specialized frontline mental health workers, along with pilot training sessions for teachers in selected schools. The system-level response is strengthened through the development of mental health and psychosocial standards and the establishment of a Youth Sounding Board to provide adolescent-friendly information to their peers.

In contrast, the right **enabling factors** can create an environment that promotes youth mental wellbeing.

A country's health strategy and the details of its **healthcare access** can support youth mental wellbeing. Currently, only a handful of European countries, such as Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Italy and France, have a youth-focused component to their mental health strategy.⁶⁴ In other countries, however, this strategy is focused mainly on characterizing and addressing post-pandemic impacts – a framing that highlights urgency but risks funding drying up if pandemic consequences are seen as short-term.



Photo credit: UNICEF - Italy

While many European countries cover access to mental health care, there are common barriers in practice.⁶⁵ These may include limited social benefits that cover only medication-based treatments rather than best-practice psychotherapies or stepped-up care. Sessions may require co-payment, or benefits may cover only a limited number of therapy sessions: for example, Belgian benefits cover 8 sessions, while benefits in Finland cover up to 80. Moreover, wait times may be long, ranging from 2-8 months in Austria, while across Europe, backlogs and waiting times for mental health care are growing.⁶⁶

Finally, **legal rights** can create an enabling environment for mental wellbeing.⁶⁷ When young people have the confidential, non-coercive right to mental health information, treatment, and prevention initiatives,⁶⁸ they may be more likely to seek support. They should also be free from discrimination in mental health care or mental health status, able to consent to treatment, and protected from restraint, seclusion, involuntary hospital admissions and other coercive practices, among other rights.





3. Where are we today?

3.1 The state of youth mental wellbeing in Europe as a growing issue with long-term impacts

Mental health conditions are among the most pressing public health issues in Europe and yet, mental wellbeing is not emphasized enough in public life.⁶⁹

More than 1 in 6 young people in Europe struggle with their mental health,⁷⁰ and nearly half of their mental health care needs go unmet.⁷¹ Recent data suggests **the situation is worsening**; in 2021, mental health disorders in the EU increased from 14.9 to 16.0 cases per 1,000 inhabitants. This rise was even more pronounced among children and adolescents, with prevalence rates for those under 15 years increasing from 8.6 to 10.1 cases per 1,000 inhabitants.⁷²

At the most extreme end of the mental health spectrum, **1 in 5 deaths among young people are caused by self-harm,**⁷³ making suicide the second leading cause of premature death among European youth aged 15-19.⁷⁴ The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this crisis, doubling depression rates among young people in several European countries.⁷⁵

The youth mental health crisis has significant economic and human costs. **In Europe, the economic burden of mental health conditions exceeds €600 billion a year** due to reduced productivity, increased healthcare costs, and social welfare expenditure.⁷⁶

What is more, mental health challenges in young people lead to increased rates of school dropout⁷⁷, social isolation⁷⁸, and strained family dynamics⁷⁹, which in turn can result in long-term social challenges, including higher rates of unemployment and unstable working conditions^{80, 81}, substance abuse, homelessness, and incarceration.⁸² For example, **between 2018 and 2022, 21% of 18-24-year-olds with a mental health condition were unemployed,** compared to only 13% of 18-24-year-olds without a mental health condition.⁸³

Mental health challenges can also **have detrimental implications for families, communities and societies.** Young people who experience such conditions are more likely to face a poorer quality of life, achieve lower educational success, develop substance abuse disorders, undergo job and financial insecurity, and struggle to maintain healthy relationships.⁸⁴ In turn, these can negatively impact affected individuals' and their loved ones' physical health and the functioning of communities and societies.⁸⁵

Europe's youth mental health crisis is both a symptom and cause of strains on public services^{86, 87}, lowering productivity and workforce participation.^{88, 89} **According to OECD data, the economic burden of mental health conditions in Europe can, each year, amount to as much as 4% of the EU's total GDP.**⁹⁰

3.2 Europe is increasingly engaging with mental wellbeing, creating the foundations for positive change

As public attention grows, a cultural destigmatization of mental health and wellbeing topics is underway. In recent decades, the expanding acceptance of biopsychosocial models of mental health, which recognize the web of factors that impact wellbeing, is increasingly being incorporated into European policy.⁹¹ Additionally, while the pandemic exacerbated mental health struggles, it also helped bring these challenges out of the private sphere, contributing to greater public awareness, advocacy efforts and recognition from governments.

Reflecting the growing recognition of the importance of, and current threats to, mental wellbeing in Europe, the EU has begun to allocate funding and resources to youth mental wellbeing and to recognize the need for cross-sectoral and holistic approaches in policy and practice. In the 2024 Political Guidelines, the European Commission President, Ursula Von der Leyen highlights youth mental health, "I believe one of our greatest challenges in this decade is protecting the mental health of our children and young people – especially online."⁹²

Notably, the EU activated €1.23 billion in 2023 for tackling mental health in Europe, including specific initiatives and a stated focus on young people. Alongside this investment, which will support states to implement EU level priorities, the EU has also recently funded research on youth mental health, and, as part of its European Youth Strategy, has committed to do more to take youth voices into account when developing policies that affect young people.

Breaking down the EU's mental health initiatives and budget

Of the 20 flagship initiatives outlined as part of the EU's approach for mental health, five were specifically targeted at children and young people:⁹³

- A child and youth mental health network (€2 million), via existing children's participation platforms and youth networks, is being explored.
- A prevention toolkit with UNICEF (€2 million) is being developed under the Healthier Together initiative of the EU4Health program.
- An initiative providing technical support to Cyprus, Italy, Slovenia and Andalusia, to enhance collaboration between different sectors like health, education, social services and child protection systems, dedicates €2 million to tools for children and young people to actively address healthy lifestyles and the prevention of mental health challenges.
- A flagship initiative 'Healthy Screens, Healthy Youth' consists of €21 million for the Safer Internet Centers program and implementing and reinforcing the Digital Services Act covering but not limited to a healthier digital environment for children and young people.
- And €44.5 million dedicated to research, stakeholder consultation, and strengthening networks for young cancer survivors and their families and caregivers.⁹⁴

Other parts of the budget go to more general applications with youth-related elements:

- €11 million goes toward mainstreaming mental health in all policies.
- €4 million is dedicated to engaging more stakeholders on the 'Icehearts Europe' model [see CS 2, European funding of targeted prevention programs for youth mental wellbeing] and expanding it to more countries.
- €3 million goes toward building local practitioner capacity and expanding the 'Let's talk about children' model for young people and their families in vulnerable groups.

Additionally, on World Mental Health Day 2024, the EU launched an #InThisTogether campaign targeted at adolescents and young adults to raise awareness of tackling stigma around mental health, a discussion paper, and other capacity-building measures.

At the start of 2025, Poland, which holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, has made youth mental health a priority in its list of security dimensions. The Polish Presidency program highlights that health security is also about the wellbeing of EU citizens, requiring a "focus on ways to improve the mental health of children and adolescents in the digital age, health promotion activities and disease prevention".⁹⁵

This commitment at EU level is a promising start and provides a foundation from which progress can be made.



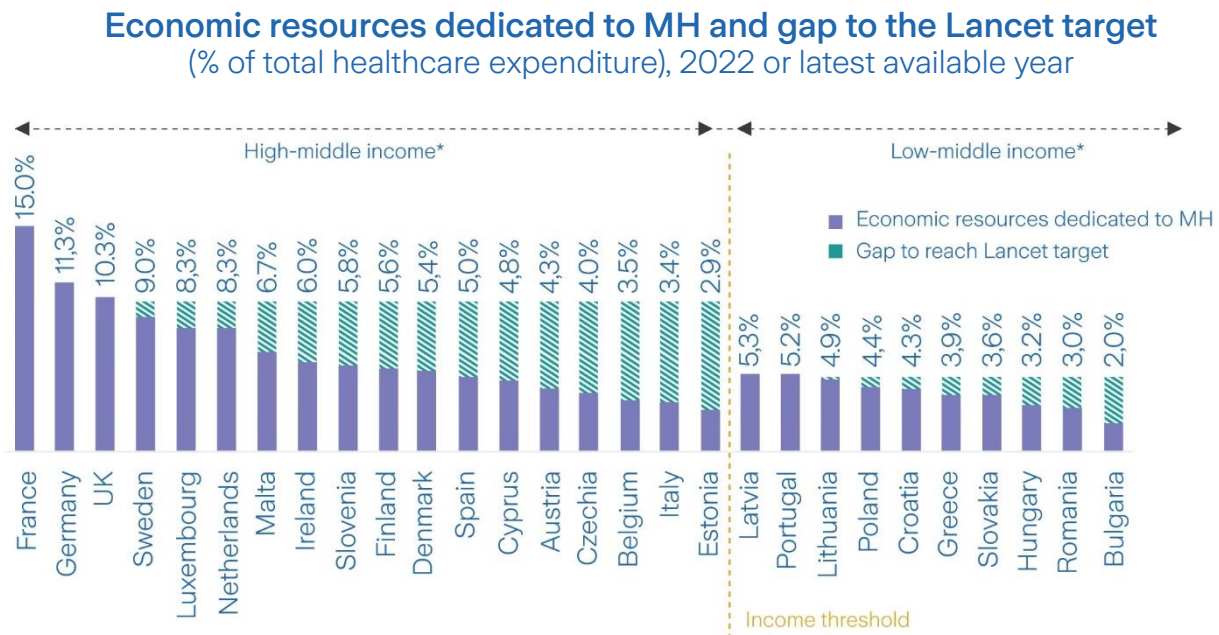
3.3 Gaps and challenges persist in today’s mental wellbeing ecosystem

As outlined here and more in the next chapter, public and private actors ranging from European and national governments to grassroots organizations, are increasingly engaging with the severity of the challenge faced. There are myriad innovative programs supporting promotion and prevention in communities with great effect. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the remaining gaps and challenges to collectively identify the most impactful responses.

Funding for mental wellbeing lags behind what is required, particularly for promotion and prevention

The availability of mental health care and support across Europe remains far below the needs of its population. A 2020 EuroStat survey found that 25% of people who sought support for mental health and wellbeing had difficulty accessing assistance.⁹⁶ A major study and set of recommendations published by the Lancet advised that countries spend at least 10% of healthcare expenditure on mental health, but analysis shows that most countries lag well behind this target (see figure 3).

Figure 3: Very few European countries have allocated the Lancet target level of healthcare spending to mental health (10% for high income countries and 5% of lower income threshold countries). Source: TEHA Group on Lancet, OECD, WHO, Eurostat and AGENAS, 2024 data presented in The European House Ambrosetti & Anglini Pharma. 2024. Headway – Mental Health Index 4.0. Access [here](#).



It remains challenging to find quality data on the distribution of mental healthcare spending between treatment, promotion and prevention. However, anecdotal evidence from professionals in the space, and a limited number of analyses suggest that significant proportions are dedicated to treatment, particularly for older people. Moreover, some national policies frame youth mental health as a post-pandemic issue, which could be implicitly understood as temporary.

When health systems disproportionately prioritize treatment – understandably, in response to the most urgent needs – this causes uncoordinated and fragmented approaches across Europe⁹⁷, and young people can be stranded between various means of support.⁹⁸

In the longer term, promotion and prevention have far lower costs per individual and can reduce treatment costs by lowering the number of people in need. This return on investment could be particularly pronounced with further investment in promotion and prevention for young people in a period of their lives when most mental health challenges emerge. According to many experts, this balance in funding has yet to be achieved in most of the EU.

Implementation of leading policies and principles at national level is not advanced enough

Youth wellbeing policies and services are primarily the responsibility of individual EU member states; the EU's position is complementary⁹⁹, supporting research, tools, and technical assistance for member states, grounded in its role of establishing a shared set of priorities and common ambitions.

However, at national level, many governments have not gone far enough in modernizing approaches to mental health and wellbeing, according to calls-to-action from the WHO¹⁰⁰ and, separately, from a collection of 15 major mental wellbeing initiatives.¹⁰¹ The result is a disconnect between the increasingly progressive policies and narratives promoted at an international level and the on-the-ground reality for many European cities.



The European Union has been willing to stand up to some serious global dynamics on the basis of rights that they want to protect... there's a huge opportunity to show global leadership [on mental wellbeing] for others to follow.

– Jules Chappell,
CEO, Kokoro Change

Delivery of promotion and prevention for young people in communities is fragmented, leaving gaps

While some European countries including Poland, France, Portugal, and Croatia have taken steps to integrate to certain degrees mental wellbeing promotion and prevention in school curricula and activities, others have not. In many cases, community mental wellbeing initiatives are delivered by an assortment of smaller programs and civil society organizations in a relatively uncoordinated fashion. While the work of these organizations is vital and to be celebrated, without some level of public coordination and monitoring, there is a risk that certain areas and populations will remain overlooked or that quality standards might not be fulfilled.

Although funding for mental wellbeing and mental health in communities is increasing, it remains well below the level required to reach all young people. Many programs report significant challenges in accessing such funding, especially when they aim to scale up and sustain their efforts over time. This is particularly challenging for smaller initiatives that are based in tight-knit communities or serving the needs of targeted vulnerable groups.

There is a lack of capacity in clinical and non-clinical settings to support mental wellbeing

Many countries in Europe face a shortage of trained professionals in mental health and wellbeing. The number of qualified psychologists varies significantly from country to country. For example, Portugal has 10 psychologists for every 100,000 inhabitants, while Denmark has 54. In a 2023 survey by the European Commission, the WHO and OECD, 16 out of 29 countries identified human resources and capacities within their priority needs.¹⁰²

Supporting educators to promote mental wellbeing by integrating such measures into formal education systems can help expand such needed capacity [see Case Study – CS - 1, Por Ti – Promoting mental wellbeing in schools in Portugal]. Like this, teachers, social workers and other caregivers across Europe could play a significant part in supporting young people's mental wellbeing. However, many feel unprepared to do so.¹⁰³



[CS 1] Por Ti – Promoting mental wellbeing in schools in Portugal

Por Ti - a program in Portugal with Missão Azul, implemented by Entrepreneurs for Social Inclusion (EPIS) in collaboration with the University of Coimbra - is an innovative initiative that aims to prevent mental health issues and promote mental wellbeing in school settings, particularly for adolescents (12-16 years old), families, teachers and other school staff. What makes it innovative is how it adapts proven methods for preventing mental wellbeing issues – most of all from the *Unified Protocol for Emotional Disorders* - into a structured and scalable approach that is delivered by psychologists. There are two phases:

- **Phase 1:** A focus on raising awareness of mental wellbeing prevention through workshops
- **Phase 2:** Eight sessions that target cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of prevention

These sessions cover progressive preventative cognitive insights and behavioral tools, such as addressing negative thinking, emotional regulation, and self-criticism. It also encompasses a "compassion module", which teaches self-care for young people.

To better demonstrate the impact of prevention and its potential to be scaled up in Portugal, the Por Ti program is conducting a randomized trial involving 600 students across prevention programs and control groups. Already in just the first months, the impact of the program is clear.

From January 2023 to December 2024, the program was implemented in 294 schools, involving more than 60,800 students, 1,800 families, and 5,700 teachers. In Phase 2, more than 80% of students involved to date attended six to eight sessions (out of a total of 8), indicating a high level engagement, interest, and sustained value. In Phase 1, when asked about the impact of the program, 65% of students, 96% of families, and 93% of teachers/school staff say they will use the strategies they learned in the program in their daily lives.

Inconsistent and underdeveloped measurement and evaluation delay investment and mean action is not as evidence-based as it could be

Due to the primary focus on treatment over the past decades, there is a lack of quality data and impact metrics for prevention, promotion and enabling environments for mental wellbeing. Treatment operates on shorter timeframes and its effects are easier to measure, while the effects of prevention and promotion are believed to be “invisible” as they work to pre-empt issues before they arise.¹⁰⁴ This makes it harder for practitioners and politicians to demonstrate their value in the short term. The impacts of prevention and promotion also take much longer to notice and measure, and the outcomes may be more qualitative, yet it is important to define and measure these impacts as they materialize at individual and system levels.

Without clear data, policymakers, education systems, and funders are more hesitant to shift their focus away from treatment and toward more proactive prevention approaches. While methods of measuring the outcomes and impacts of prevention and promotion do exist, they may not be standard practice when interventions are designed and implemented and the quality of evaluation is highly varied.¹⁰⁵ Ultimately, the simultaneous need for data and the perception of difficulty to quantitatively measure the impact of prevention and promotion, is what can stall progress.



Institutional visions for mental health and wellbeing

Many visions for a positive future for mental wellbeing exist, but each institution approaches it from different angles and areas of expertise. Leading examples include:

- **Mental Health Europe (MHE)**, the independent, non-governmental, EU co-funded mental health network, has a **strategic plan** that takes “a human rights, community-based, recovery-oriented and psychosocial approach” to a mentally healthy Europe.¹⁰⁶ MHE acknowledges the importance of an integrated approach where prevention, promotion, and treatment work in tandem.¹⁰⁷
- **The European Mental Health Action plan** enacted by the WHO Regional Office for Europe envisions a future defined by equal access to mental wellbeing, informed by solid research and achieved through coordinated, cross-sectoral partnerships.¹⁰⁸
- The **WHO European Framework for Action on Mental Health** works toward a future with universal mental health coverage, an integration of mental health into emergency preparation and response, and an ever-growing foundation of timely and relevant data.¹⁰⁹
- In 2023, multiple key points of contact within the EU discourse around mental health came together to sign a Joint Statement calling for a 'Mental Health in All Policies' approach.¹¹⁰ This cross-sectoral stakeholder network engages health and non-health-related sectors, highlighting the need for action in non-health policy areas.¹¹¹
- The European Commission has developed **three guiding principles** for a mentally well future: adequate and effective prevention; access to high quality and affordable mental healthcare and treatment; reintegration into society after recovery.¹¹² Funding and resource allocation has followed, like the already mentioned €1.23 billion in support of different mental health activities for the coming years, including integration of mental health in policy areas such as employment, education, research, digitalization, urban planning, culture, environment and climate.¹¹³





4. Bridging the gap

Actions that pave the way for a mentally well future in Europe

After identifying the existing gaps in achieving a mentally healthy Europe, a series of strategic recommendations have been developed to address them. Some of these investments will take time to pay off but, the sooner they begin, the sooner that – economic, societal and human – return will arrive. While some of these recommendations are already being acted on by certain governments and institutions, there remains a need for greater scope and scale in all of them, leveraging specifically the potential for public-private-nonprofit partnerships.

4.1 Changing the system – shifts needed from all stakeholders

Rebalance prioritization and funding to support a range of targeted and universal prevention and promotion interventions

Calibrating how attention, funding and resources are distributed between treatment, prevention, and promotion – and within these the right mix of universal programs and targeted approaches to vulnerable groups – can help activate, long-term solutions for youth mental wellbeing.

Significant funding towards treatment is needed to support the high numbers of youth experiencing mental health conditions today. However, the balance should ideally **shift towards prevention and promotion activities** that are considered the greatest form of protection. Not only prevention and promotion approaches are assessed to be more cost effective by reducing the demand for treatment conditions that they help prevent; most importantly they enable substantial societal gains and human benefits at the scale of a nation.¹¹⁴

Within this shift, **support for both universal and targeted promotion and prevention interventions** is needed. Universal interventions that bolster the resilience and mental wellbeing of all youth are important to enhancing overall mental wellbeing among youth, regardless of social and educational background. In the same way that education on physical health is essential, emotional literacy is crucial for young people to thrive, manage stress and anxiety. Furthermore, targeted interventions are especially important to provide support to more vulnerable groups such as youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, migrant adolescents or those experiencing other risk factors.

Policymakers in particular can **include prevention and promotion as a priority in high-level health and wellbeing strategies** and directives, from which public and private funders, healthcare providers, educators and other institutions at different levels take their direction. This shift is visible in the policies of some EU states today, such as in France,¹¹⁵ and should become more widespread.

When supported by policy direction, this redirection in emphasis towards prevention and promotion can enable mental wellbeing initiatives and practices to flourish in a wide range of non-clinical settings, from schools to sports and arts communities. It can also prompt a re-assessment of how existing resources are used. In schools, for example, the role of on-site psychologists or counsellors can be re-oriented to better balance treatment alongside targeted and universal prevention and promotion activities.



Prevention is not prevalent enough today. Even in schools where psychologists are available, they are often seen as being there to speak only to ‘troubled’ kids. They should be there for everyone... strengthening connections between schools and communities, promoting mental wellbeing and delivering targeted interventions for some children.

– Pedro Dantas da Cunha,
Secretary of State for Administration and
Innovation in Education,
Government of Portugal

[CS 2] European funding of targeted prevention programs for youth mental wellbeing

The [Icehearts Europe project, funded by the EU4Health Action Grant](#), aims to improve the mental and physical wellbeing of vulnerable children across Europe. It is based on the successful Finnish model, which provides long-term, holistic support through team sports and mentorship. The project engages children at risk of social exclusion and focuses on building life skills, resilience, and social connections through physical activity. Pilots are currently being implemented in various European countries to adapt the model across different cultural contexts.

Invest in multidisciplinary, multistakeholder community-based approaches

Nearly all prevention and promotion initiatives can be delivered via non-clinical settings like schools, community centers, sport clubs and online spaces. Since young people already frequent these settings, delivering initiatives this way increases access to adolescents and reduces the stigma-related barrier of going to a space dedicated to mental health. Close coordination and referrals systems between community-based programs and healthcare providers that can support individuals with more acute and clinical needs is also essential.

While treatment is focused on the individual, community-based efforts create various coordinated points of delivery for promotion and prevention, increasing the likelihood of long-term success.¹¹⁶ Evidence suggests that youth interventions which engage schools, families, caregivers and communities are more effective in promoting mental wellbeing and positive development than those targeting only the adolescent.¹¹⁷ Parental involvement is crucial to the success of programs aimed at fostering pro-social behavior, enhancing mental wellbeing, reducing stress, and preventing violence and conduct disorders.¹¹⁸

Crucially, bringing mental wellbeing into community settings and delivering them alongside other activities like education, sports or art spreads responsibility and agency to a broader range of stakeholders – impacting the community, regional and national youth mental wellbeing systems. Wider engagement and shared responsibility including community actors and other non-clinical stakeholders lighten the burden of supporting mental wellbeing and help achieve the reach and scale that is needed to support all youth.

[CS 3] There are already thriving system-change and community-based prevention and promotion initiatives around Europe

The henka initiative: Promoting mental wellbeing in educational settings in Spain with specific actions to promote the resilience of adolescents, young people, and their environment, including families and teachers

henka focuses on culture change to prioritize and promote the emotional wellbeing of young people in educational communities. Delivered in collaboration with Hospital St. Joan de Deu, the initiative focuses on equipping 12 to 16-year-olds with the emotional capabilities they need to face adversity in a healthy way by increasing the resilience of their surrounding communities.

It does this by placing mental wellbeing front and center of educational and family culture, reducing the risk of developing mental health disorders and mitigating the negative impact of other wellbeing issues.

The projected impact of the program is an estimated 575,000 people in 3 and a half years. Already, more than 150,000 adolescents, teachers and caregivers have been impacted by a combination of school-based and digital campaign activities.

As demonstrated by the henka program, **scaling a community-centered mental wellbeing** approach requires significant investment and policy signals from governments, including the **integration of mental wellbeing into other policy domains** like education. With this foundation to change the youth mental wellbeing system in Spain, schools and other institutions need the capabilities to coordinate and collaborate with mental wellbeing practitioners and initiatives - aiming for local and national education systems to be changed in a sustainable way. Often, such programs require additional support from other sources, including additional funding from private and philanthropic sources, to start and scale programs. Partnerships can also take different shapes and forms, such as offering a wider range of avenues to reach young people. As part of the henka program, the Fundación Princesa de Girona introduced new program facilitators, and reached new audiences in educational centers that

were not initially included in the program. As a result, different partners could pool their expertise and networks to amplify their impact and benefit a greater number of young people.

Over time, programs can become more self-sufficient – and thus sustainable - as skills are built in the organizations and institutions that host them, and lessening treatment needs means budgets can increasingly shift towards promotion and prevention.

[CS 4] Isle Listen: A promotion and prevention initiative that has scaled to reach a whole community

The Isle Listen project is a pioneering early intervention and mental health support service designed to address the needs of children and young people up to the age of 25 on the Isle of Man. The initiative takes a holistic approach through a combination of one-to-one therapeutic support and educational mental wellbeing awareness sessions in schools. These services are delivered by a diverse team of Wellbeing Practitioners, Therapists, Wellbeing Facilitators, a Safeguard Lead, and a Schools Team Lead.

The Wellbeing Practitioners and Therapists offer one-to-one sessions for young people, which include assessments, risk evaluations and the setting of personalized goals. In addition to individual support, Wellbeing Facilitators provide mental health education to children as young as 7 through classroom sessions and assemblies, covering key topics such as emotional literacy, coping skills, and self-esteem.

After gaining further funding, the program is now operating in 37 of Isle of Man's 39 schools. In the 2023-2024 academic year, Isle Listen delivered over 1,000 one-to-one support. As the only organization on the Isle of Man offering these services, Isle Listen provides mental health and wellbeing support that is otherwise unavailable, enabling it to reach more than 12,000 children and young people across the island with mental health education and more than 900 young people with one-to-one therapeutic support.

Through a partnership with the Z Zurich Foundation that goes beyond funding, the program has also had an impact in the workplace. It has worked with Zurich on the Isle of Man to complement their existing mental health and wellbeing programs, including 12 local Zurich employees being trained by Isle Listen to become Mental Health First Aiders.



Photo credit: Isle Listen

Increase training and support for a range of professionals and non-professionals that can play a role in promoting youth mental wellbeing

Increasing the places through which youth can access mental wellbeing activities must be accompanied by a **scaling and broadening of support made available to different stakeholders, including teachers, healthcare professionals**, parents, individuals volunteering with and coaching youth, and other caregivers that will work alongside educators and mental wellbeing professionals.

Educational and vocational institutions responsible for the training of teachers and other community support professionals will also have an important contribution to make, namely by **integrating mental wellbeing into the curriculum of connected careers**. Short courses and “top ups” will also need to be developed, to either offer first entry points to the topic or keep this wide range of participants in mental wellbeing programs abreast of what is a rapidly evolving field of research and practice.

Schools and organizations should **also offer training opportunities to parents and caregivers**, to support their participation in promoting the mental wellbeing of their adolescents. Several initiatives profiled in this paper, including *Isle Listen*, *Por Ti* and *henka*, have made central to their impact strategy the engagement with caregivers via in-person sessions, take-home resources, digital solutions and other means of connection into their programs.

[CS 5] The Side by Side Project in Türkiye: Supporting professionals to build mental wellbeing literacy and the capacity to support others

Launched in Türkiye in 2022 during the onset of the pandemic, the Side by Side project prioritizes two key professional groups: healthcare professionals and teachers. Made possible through collaboration with local partners [Needs Map](#) and [Zurich Türkiye](#), this project offers professionals free online psychosocial support to help with mental health challenges, such as high levels of anxiety, depression or burnout syndrome. These services are provided through the project’s Yan Yanayız Online Platform. The model became so successful in supporting professionals that, in the wake of the Kahramanmaraş earthquake in February 2023, it began providing psychological support for disaster workers and volunteers too. Additionally, both online and on the field, psychosocial support is provided to individuals affected by the earthquake through local experts.

The program also encompasses a national digital prevention and preparedness campaign catered to young people and caregivers. Of the campaign’s target audiences, 94% of surveyed individuals provided positive feedback, demonstrating the meaningful impact of the content to change attitudes toward mental wellbeing and break down stigma over Türkiye.

[CS 6] EU-PROMENS: Expanding the capacity of professionals to support mental wellbeing and health in community settings

The **EU-PROMENS project, funded by the EU4Health program**, is designed to build mental health capacity for professionals across 24 countries in Europe between 2024 and 2026. It focuses on a multidisciplinary training program for various professionals, including healthcare workers, educators, and social workers, with an emphasis on community settings. The program also includes an exchange component to facilitate cross-country learning and collaboration. Its overall goal is to enhance mental health services by providing better training and support for professionals involved in mental health care.¹¹⁹

Balance resilience and destigmatisation in mental wellbeing programs and conversations

In recent years, there has been significant progress in destigmatizing discussions of mental health among various communities, though to different degrees. This progress is celebrated across the mental wellbeing space, but also considered limited. While conversations about mental health and acknowledging challenges to one's mental wellbeing is more common, this normalization is not yet seen as extending to taking proactive action to promote one's mental wellbeing.

All stakeholders involved in mental wellbeing need to **balance two messages in their work and advocacy** with young people: continuing to normalize conversations on mental wellbeing and accepting moments of difficulty, while also promoting resilience, emotional regulation, stress management techniques, coping skills and other proactive measures to bolster and protect wellbeing.



It's OK not to be OK, but it's even better to look after yourself in a proactive way... If we can encourage young people to go, 'Not only am I OK, but I'm having a good day,' and celebrate that, I think that would be a huge success for us.

– **Dr. Hannah McCormack**,
Campaign Manager,
Tackle Your Feelings

Expand data collection on mental wellbeing and recognize the value of different forms of data, metrics and evidence

Evidence already shows that prevention and promotion is an effective protective strategy and can result in cost savings in the long term.¹²⁰ However funders and institutions often struggle to justify funding programs that do not have clear outputs and outcomes. Recent meta-studies indicate a scarcity of high-quality evidence identifying which prevention and promotion interventions are most effective or appropriate for a given population.¹²¹ To change this, supporters need to **take a wider range of sources and types of data into consideration, such as changing attitudes and behaviors towards managing and promoting mental health. Additionally, they should also become more comfortable with supporting programs that have less immediately tangible impacts.**



[CS 7] ZZF IMW impact metrics

Together with all its youth mental wellbeing partners, the Z Zurich Foundation implements a set of recommended impact metrics. Each partnership includes the measurement of two impact personas: positively impacted lives (change of attitude) and the number of lives transformed (change of behavior).

An individual's life is "positively impacted" if they demonstrate a change of attitude toward mental wellbeing and apply newly acquired knowledge from the program in their life.

An individual's life is "transformed" if they change their behavior to proactively look after their mental wellbeing because of taking part in program's activities. These activities empower individuals with skills, tools and resources to act, reinforcing positive outcomes for themselves and those around them. Transformation happens when individuals put these skills into practice or plan to within a specific timeframe. It is the greatest level of impact.

Depending on the delivery mechanism (e.g. school-based, sport-focused, digital campaign), evaluation for those two personas is conducted before, during and after the program. This process uses questionnaires, surveys and focus groups to assess the impact achieved.

Whenever relevant, programs also include indicators showing when a given system (e.g., a secondary school education system) is being changed and impact is scaled accordingly through – among other levers - advocacy and partnerships.

To better account for the outcomes and impact of prevention and promotion, **quantitative data can more often be coupled with storytelling, narrative, and other qualitative data.** Qualitative methods and data have long been used in social science in academically rigorous ways, alongside statistical insights, to help provide a more complete picture and demonstrate the power, potential, and legitimacy of mixed methods. Beyond impact measurement, this more nuanced and story-based data also conveys the gravity and human impact of youth mental wellbeing interventions and encourages a holistic understanding of impact – from a blend of data-driven and story-focused perspective. The Z Zurich Foundation, for example, captures a mix of quantitative and qualitative information to detail and highlight the positively impacted and transformed lives resulting from their work.



In youth mental health, we always miss talking about targets. This absence of targets means that we are not making anyone accountable for the progress we're making with youth mental health. If we have targets then we are making governments accountable to compile data, to share data, and to better implement data-informed policies.

Chiara Servili

Technical Officer, Focal Point for Child and Young People's Mental Health, Department of Mental Health, Brain Health and Substance Use, World Health Organization (WHO)



Diana Chao, founder of Letters to Strangers, on metrics and defining success

Diana Chao is a youth leader and the founder of Letters to Strangers - a youth-run nonprofit that destigmatizes mental health issues through letter-writing, peer education and advocacy.

"I've had [funders] ask for specific management criteria, like 'how many people have you saved?' or 'how many suicides have you prevented?' I have no idea how I'm supposed to measure that. If I give you a number, it's a lie because I have no idea... I would love to see more conversation with people involved in the field about it, because you can't apply the same principles of physical health to this measurement."

Wherever possible, prevention and promotion initiatives should **include measurement and evaluation in their execution and draw on existing evidence in their design, together with indicators of how envisioned systems will be changed.** Initiatives like Por Ti offer good examples of how to build rigorous measurement using randomized trials and longitudinal data into programs in collaboration with academic institutions (see CS 1).

Beyond individual program-level measurement, the economic and wider system-level impact of mental health and wellbeing in Europe is generally under-researched, making it an important and urgent area of inquiry. Researchers should seek to **gather and present data on the cost of mental wellbeing issues** and the economic benefits of prevention and promotion – at country, regional and global levels. Research about the **social return on investment (SROI)** of promotion and prevention activities should also be expanded to enable a more evidence-based selection of future investments.¹²²

SROI quantifies the social value created in relation to the resources invested, summarized in the SROI ratio. In order to test and build further evidence about SROI approaches in the youth mental wellbeing space, the Zurich Foundation worked closely with a researcher to assess how the "Por Ti" program in Portugal related impact could be measured. Observations showed that, while the methodology can be relatively complex to implement and that identified factors can be questioned, SROI provides complementary data and organizational learning to evaluate the impact of a given initiative at scale.

Through these actions, advocates and researchers can build and communicate a strong economic argument and value proposition for approaches to youth mental wellbeing¹²³, demonstrating the long-term financial benefits of early mental health support.¹²⁴ To develop more effective youth mental wellbeing policies, policymakers must listen to and consider these findings, as well as build evidence-based partnerships with local stakeholders.

Include diverse voices, starting with youth, in the development of policies and initiatives

When young people's voices, perspectives, and feedback are left out of policy development and program design, these efforts fail to represent their needs. Consequently, trust is eroded: young people and their communities may not rely on institutions to offer adequate support; funders may not trust their resources are used effectively; and communities and institutions may not enable young people to advocate and care for themselves.

There is an opportunity to significantly strengthen mental wellbeing programs and practices by including diverse voices with lived experience. For instance, international human rights law acknowledges that people with lived experiences should be meaningfully included in decisions that impact their lives.¹²⁵ Valuing the experiences of young people allows for a more textured and accurate understanding of youth mental wellbeing challenges and expands the meaning of 'expertise'. Their involvement must extend beyond tokenism and include influence on outcomes, not only outputs.

[CS 8] Engaging young autistic people in the design and delivery of a program

Autistic young people shared with the London-based charity, Ambitious about Autism, that increased knowledge and understanding of mental health issues help them to better manage their own wellbeing. In response, Ambitious about Autism, supported by the Z Zurich Foundation, launched the 'Autistic and OK' program to tackle challenges around mental health and absenteeism among young autistic students. Importantly, the program was co-designed and co-developed with autistic young people, as well as clinical psychologists, and other experts. Beyond this, the program is grounded in peer-to-peer engagement with older autistic students delivering workshops for their younger autistic peers to create a sense of community.

The primary output of this co-developed program is the [Autistic and OK toolkit](#) for 'empowering autistic pupils to take control of their mental health and wellbeing, understand themselves, and feel OK'. **Hundreds of UK schools** have already downloaded the materials and are implementing them as part of their daily educational practices.

Ensuring diversity of viewpoints in other respects, such as involving practitioners and specialists with both clinical and non-clinical backgrounds, or including decisionmakers in areas like education or healthcare, supports decision and program-making by providing a holistic view of mental wellbeing challenges. Online tools and other participative processes can be helpful resources to achieve this.

Policymakers, philanthropic funders, educational institutions and other **stakeholders that are responsible for the development of mental wellbeing policies and initiatives can take several concrete steps to include youth and other diverse voices**. These include: establishing standing advisory bodies and other methods for involving these groups, undertaking needs analysis for vulnerable youth as part of policy and initiative design, and including requirements for youth participation as funding conditions.

The importance of including youth voices

Youth voices offer authentic and experience-based insights into the challenges young people face, making solutions more relevant and effective. Because young people are the ones actively experiencing mental health struggles, and directly benefitting from solutions, they can highlight **specific stressors, cultural nuances, and barriers** to seeking help that might be overlooked by adults. For instance, the **UNICEF #OnMyMind campaign** was developed with insights gathered from tens of thousands of young people, ensuring it resonates with young people's needs, respects their views, and is relevant to their lives.

Moreover, incorporating youth voices also benefits both the programs and the participants by fostering a sense of **ownership and empowerment** among young people. And involving youth directly in these conversations helps normalize open discussions and acting on mental health, ultimately reducing stigma.

PP

...there's policy about young people, but not with young people. It's speaking for young people, but a lot of time it's very, very clear that this is not from the perspective of a young person.

Alex Quinn,
Policy officer; European Youth Forum



4.2 Recommendations for the EU Institutions

Establish a Europe-wide positive vision for the future of youth mental wellbeing

EU policymakers play a pivotal role in co-creating (with various stakeholders) and communicating a clear goal for mental health. The European Commission's [Tracking Framework for the Implementation of the Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health](#) outlines a structured strategy to address mental health challenges in the EU.¹²⁶ It covers initiatives such as improving prevention, early intervention, and promoting mental health across sectors like education and digitalization. Special focus is placed on vulnerable groups, including young people, with actions to foster mental health resilience and reduce stigma.

It is encouraging to see the holistic and ambitious approach of this framework. However, what is still missing at the European level is **a clear vision of what countries should be aiming for**, to accompany this framework of tools and actions at their disposal. This can create a common goal around which policymakers, advocates and other actors in mental wellbeing can collaborate, grounded in a positive narrative of change, not only an avoidance of risks.

Recognizing the truth of the adage that “what gets measured gets done”, such a vision would include **a holistic set of measures that are used to track national and European progresses**. These would go beyond reductions in acute mental health issues to wider measures of mental wellbeing and its associated societal and economic benefits. Some efforts to define such metrics have already been undertaken by European governments and other nations (see page 18). Ideally, progress should be set against a baseline also set at the EU level, which can build from the Euro Barometer survey released in October 2023¹²⁷, and include concrete targets that are adopted by individual EU countries.



When something can be measured, it tends to be prioritized. That's why the measurement component is so important to us. Without clear targets, there's little accountability, and people may not understand what we're working toward or know whether it's making an impact.

– Joanna Lai,
Health Specialist, Maternal Newborn,
Adolescent, Child Health Unit,
UNICEF NYHQ

Defining and measuring a country's mental wellbeing

Nations will be better positioned to prioritize mental wellbeing once they have a clear definition and set of metrics for what they should aim to achieve. Some organizations and national governments have sought to create broader measures of wellbeing. One example is the UN's annually published Human Development Index, which focuses on objective measures such as graduation rates, life expectancy, access to healthcare, environmental quality, and is commonly referred to as a more holistic measure of national wellbeing.¹²⁸ Other tools like the Satisfaction with Life Scale, Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE), Subjective Happiness Scale, typically gather more subjective data through surveys, informed by guidelines such as those first published by the OECD in 2013 in 'Guidelines for Measuring Subjective Well-being'.¹²⁹

While many governments are taking steps towards defining a more holistic vision of wellbeing for their populations, there is not a standardized approach, and the resulting metrics do not have a significant influence on decision-making. Bhutan is the only country to have put “Gross National Happiness” at the core of its development strategy.¹³⁰ The Wellbeing Alliance Governments (WEGO), a group of progressive nations that includes small nations like Scotland, Iceland, Wales, Finland and New Zealand, has been collaborating to define new measures of wellbeing that go well beyond GDP, but no nation has adopted them today.

Further serve as a center of excellence that can guide the actions of states and other actors

Building on existing initiatives like the recently launched [EU Repository on Mental Health Best and Promising Practices](#),¹³¹ the EU has a critical facilitating role in **capturing and disseminating evidence and guidance in support of effective policies and practices**. Although the existing repository is a promising start, there is considerable work to be done to grow its body of research and registered programs, alongside increasing awareness of it among policymakers and other decision makers that will most benefit from its content.

Build on existing efforts to understand the influence of social media in mental wellbeing and take appropriate action

Social media is a double-edged sword when it comes to mental wellbeing. On the one hand, social media platforms provide a space for youth to connect with others, support one another, and access information about mental wellbeing. On the other hand, evidence increasingly shows that social media use can have a serious negative impact on youth mental wellbeing.¹³²

The EU has started to actively address the impact of social media on young people's mental wellbeing through several initiatives and policy measures. Notably, The Better Internet for Kids (BIK+) strategy, adopted in May 2022, aims to create a safe digital environment for children,¹³³ while the Digital Services Act includes provisions to enhance protections for young users of online platforms. There are plans to launch a bloc-wide inquiry into the effects of social media on youth wellbeing, including investigations of platforms regarding their content moderation practices.

While awaiting the outcomes of these ongoing investigations and consultations, growing calls to action from experts suggest that **the EU should be prepared to take significant regulatory steps to address the effects of social media use on youth mental wellbeing**. These might include, for example, requiring platforms to provide more detailed and frequent reports on their algorithms' impact on user wellbeing, especially for younger users, and implementing stricter regulations on design features that may contribute to addictive behavior, such as infinite scrolling or autoplay functions.

The EU might also include regulations that enforce calls-to-action made in the UN's Pact for the Future, Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations.¹³⁴ These include calls on social media companies to provide safer environments for young people, to provide training on online safety, to improve reporting mechanisms, and to allow researchers' access to data on social media usage. The above efforts can help to amplify the positives and reduce the negative impacts on young people.

More radically, the EU may also follow calls to place age restrictions on social media platforms, as is already being considered in several countries around the world. Alongside direct regulation of social media platforms, the EU can also **develop and implement comprehensive digital literacy programs in schools and supporting resources for teachers and caregivers** across member states, focusing on critical thinking skills and healthy social media usage.



4.3 Recommendations for national and local governments

Integrate prevention and promotion for mental wellbeing in all areas of policymaking and government action

Echoing calls made by over 15 institutions¹³⁵ working on mental wellbeing in Europe, this paper advocates for a **“mental wellbeing in all policies” approach**. One that recognizes the important position that institutions and aspects of life outside of healthcare occupy in supporting societies in which mental wellbeing promotion is valued and proactively managed.

National and subnational policymakers are central in **developing cohesive national strategies that integrate mental wellbeing** promotion and prevention initiatives into areas including education, employment, youth-focused activities, and community services.

A “mental health in all policies” approach, which includes the delivery of interventions in community-based settings and in tandem with other services, requires all parts of government to understand the ways that individual, socio-relational and macro factors affect mental wellbeing. This understanding must be integrated into decision-making processes and services provided. This might include integrating mental wellbeing support into programs that help teachers to identify and comfort adolescents facing difficult home situations that might affect their mental wellbeing or assist young people to find work. For example, in South Africa, a joint initiative between Junior Achievement Worldwide, Junior Achievement Africa, and Z Zurich Foundation seeks to tackle the challenges of youth not in education, employment, or training while addressing the issues of social equity, mental health, and sustainable development. At the core of the program is entrepreneurship training, but it also integrates content on mental wellbeing developed by UNICEF.

Similarly, as shown in CS 14, sport-based programs do not only foster young people to proactively look after the mental wellbeing, but can most importantly act as a national catalyst to impact how mental health is being tackled at societal level. By leveraging the widespread appeal and influence of sports among youth, these programs engage them in a familiar environment, reducing stigma and equipping them with the tools to address mental wellbeing topics effectively by emphasizing resilience, teamwork and open communication about self-care routines and mental health challenges. They effectively address the drivers of stress, anxiety and other challenges, not only their symptoms.

Beyond recognizing additional touch points through which promotion and prevention interventions can be delivered, this approach calls on governments to **identify and address drivers of negative effects on mental wellbeing** (i.e. to take a macro-level preventative approach, alongside individual level). This has implications for policy across areas including technology, environmental policy, economic development, and social policy. In the realm of socio-economic determinants of mental wellbeing risk, such an approach would influence how governments address access to adequate housing, social protection schemes for families in vulnerable situations, debt recovery, and financial hardship support. For instance, they might identify particularly stressful aspects of these experiences and create resources and processes to mitigate them or adjust policies in areas that are likely to have significant mental health implications.

Upskill stakeholders to play their part in uplifting mental wellbeing

Achieving this integrated approach will require governments to **develop and fund mental wellbeing training for civil organizations, decision makers and other relevant stakeholders**, ensuring that the latest research and programmatic developments are communicated to them to lead on the most impactful activities. It will also require training and hiring professionals with intersectional skillsets and knowledge spanning mental wellbeing and other relevant issues to deliver prevention and promotion initiatives across these settings.



This is not about adding a new layer in to policy or a new budget line, it is about reorganizing what we are already doing - in schools, sport, art, music, communities - to include mental wellbeing in an evidenced based way.

– **Pedro Dantas da Cunha**,
Secretary of State for Administration
and Innovation in Education,
Government of Portugal

A wide range of institutional guidance on mental wellbeing is available to inform policymakers and other stakeholders

The World Health Organization

- The [Psychological Interventions Implementation Manual](#)¹³⁶ is used to provide practical guidance for integrating evidence-based psychological interventions into existing services. It helps planners and service managers implement these interventions across health, social, protection, and education sectors, ensuring broader accessibility and scalability, particularly by trained non-specialists.
- The [Guidance and Practice, Mental Health, Human Rights and Legislation](#)¹³⁷ document is used to assist countries in adopting, amending, or implementing mental health legislation. It aims to ensure that mental health policies, systems, and services are aligned with international human rights standards, promoting high-quality care and support for all individuals, emphasizing equality, non-discrimination, and the protection of human rights within mental health care settings.
- The [Mental Health Atlas 2020](#)¹³⁸ is used to provide a comprehensive overview of mental health resources, policies, and systems globally. It tracks progress towards implementing the WHO's Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2030,¹³⁹ offering valuable data for health planners and policymakers to identify gaps and guide improvements in mental health services worldwide.
- The [WHO European Framework for Action on Mental Health \(2021–2025\)](#)¹⁴⁰ outlines a response to the mental health challenges heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to promote mental wellbeing as part of pandemic recovery, address stigma around mental health, and advocate for investment in accessible, high-quality mental health services.

UNICEF

- [UNICEF's Helping Adolescents to Thrive Toolkit](#)¹⁴¹ is a joint effort between UNICEF and the WHO to improve mental health programs and policies for adolescents. The initiative's goals are to promote mental health and prevent mental health conditions. Their toolkit provides evidence-based strategies for promoting and protecting the mental health of adolescents. It includes guidance on laws and policies, environments that promote mental health, support for parents and caregivers, psychosocial interventions, legal foundations for programs, and monitoring and evaluation systems.

EU Commission

- The [European Commission's comprehensive approach to mental health](#)¹⁴² places significant emphasis on the wellbeing of children and young people. It highlights the growing mental health challenges faced by youth, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including increased loneliness, depression, and anxiety. Prevention and early intervention are key, with school-based mental health programs and safer digital environments being prioritized. The initiative also focuses on fostering emotional resilience and addressing the impact of digital exposure on young people's mental health.
- The [European Commission's Best Practice Portal](#)¹⁴³ includes an EU repository on mental health, highlighting best and promising practices in mental health promotion, disease prevention, and management. Evaluated against criteria from the Expert Group on Public Health, these practices aim to support EU Member States in improving mental health outcomes and achieving health-related Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 through effective, evidence-based interventions.

IASC

- The [IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings](#)¹⁴⁴ provides comprehensive guidance for humanitarian actors to plan, coordinate, and implement a multi-sectoral response to protect and improve mental health and psychosocial wellbeing during emergencies. The guidelines include action sheets on areas such as coordination, assessment, human rights, community support, and health services, offering practical steps for immediate and long-term interventions to address the diverse mental health needs of affected populations.

Expanding funding while streamlining access for organizations that support mental wellbeing

As key intermediaries between funds and recipients, governments are critical to **simplifying and clarifying funding for youth mental health and wellbeing initiatives**. Small shifts, including information portals, simplified application processes, transparent criteria, and clear timelines help clarify funding pathways. To support a smoother flow of funding to a wider range of programs, national and local governments can establish and oversee public, centralized information portals. These portals would clearly outline funding opportunities, eligibility criteria, and application processes, while also providing functionality to support programs in applying for and tracking the progress of their applications.



There are many isolated regional and local projects in some areas, but there is not a national implementation strategy in the field... many municipalities are interested, but we don't have the resources to broaden our coverage.

- **Diogo Pereira,**
General Manager,
EPIS – Por Ti



4.4 Recommendations for mental wellbeing programs and initiatives

Be guided by and drive the generation of high-quality evidence and best practice

The mental wellbeing space faces challenges and nuances in generating and interpreting different forms of evidence. Civil society organizations, advocacy groups and funder communities can support change by both promoting and using a diverse range of measures to evaluate, document and disseminate the impacts of their initiatives. These include direct impacts on mental wellbeing, as well as wider impact measures such as financial impact, onward influence on life outcomes, etc.

Organizations delivering interventions and programs contribute by building best practices. While tailored interventions for specific vulnerable groups should be valued and supported as equally vital as universal interventions, there are opportunities for any organization supporting youth mental wellbeing to promote lessons learnt and insights gained from their work. Program-focused partnerships, **peer-to-peer exchanges, open sharing of data and resources, and other forms of interaction** can all help to grow and strengthen the body of practice in the mental wellbeing space. Today, many organizations struggle to find the time to engage in such collaborations due to other priorities or resource constraints.



We know that there are particular moments of risk in people's lives, but these can also be turned into opportunities to safeguard mental health for the long term with the right, evidence-based interventions.

Dr Carmel Cefai,
Founding Director and Professor,
Centre for Resilience and
Socioemotional Health,
University of Malta

The Global Accelerator Hub

As part of the Thriving Together program, UNICEF and the Z Zurich Foundation are developing the Accelerator Hub, an online, dynamic platform to facilitate global learning, develop partnerships, and disseminate evidence-based materials to lead quality youth mental wellbeing initiatives. This knowledge hub will collect knowledge from implementing organizations and activate resources to accelerate collective impact.

Funders can support organizations to engage in these activities by **setting aside funding for learning and advocacy activities of grantees**. These actions can lead to the scaling and proliferation of further tailored interventions. To address this need, the Z Zurich Foundation has established the Collective for Youth Mental Wellbeing," a cross-learning platform for all its mental wellbeing partners, seeking to promote the exchange of ideas and distribute innovative solutions and accelerate impact on a collective basis.

[CS 9] The 'Nightline Europe' Network

Nightline is a non-profit organization which works to improve student mental health through individual action on awareness-raising and prevention. Its helpline is run by student listening volunteers, trained and supported by mental health professionals. The helpline is open from 8.30pm to 2.30am, providing anonymous, confidential, nonjudgmental and nondirective listening in both English and French.

Nightline France was launched in 2016 by an Irish Nightline Dublin volunteer studying in Paris. Ever since, Nightline France has placed great importance on links with other Nightlines. In 2023, it launched a network of French-, German- and English-speaking European Nightlines. It now boasts over 20 members and plans to integrate more of the over 70 Nightlines operating across the world.

This 'Nightline Europe' network enables sharing best practices along with pooling efforts and data to raise awareness and break the taboo on mental health for young people across Europe.

4.5 Recommendations for businesses and private funders

Support initiatives to scale and create sustainable impact, focusing on roles public finance cannot easily play

Private funders, including foundations, businesses and other philanthropic organizations can play a critical role to steer youth mental wellbeing initiatives or help to plug vital gaps in current funding for the promotion and prevention agenda. In particular, they can initiate strategic partnerships to prompt action and help to **catalyze the growth of promising initiatives**. This includes **flexible funding** where relevant and helping programs to scale and maximize their impact based on existing programs. Funders should seek to understand the gaps and needs in the places or communities they aim to assist. Depending on their findings, their contributions may be better utilized in supporting the launch of new programs or enabling the scaling of existing initiatives. The Z Zurich Foundation has encompassed partnerships with private, public and civil organizations at the heart of its scaling and system change ambition at national and global levels.

[CS 10] HeadStart Fund in Ireland: Philanthropy and public sectors matching ambition and funding

The HeadStart Fund is a three-year, €3M fund created by Rethink Ireland that supports organizations and projects working to provide early interventions, wellbeing and resilience programs, and other mental health supports to young people in Ireland. The fund builds expertise and capacity of local organizations by providing grants and capacity-building support to social innovations that have proof of impact, scalability, and who are innovatively working to enhance, sustain and take action on the mental wellbeing of young people living in Ireland.

Crucially, the HeadStart Fund connects matched funding from the Z Zurich Foundation to the Irish Government's Health Service Executive's (HSE) contribution to mental wellbeing promotion and preventions programming, demonstrating how public-private funding can come together to achieve a common ambition. This funder and local implementer matching model generates new opportunity and a scale of impact none of the stakeholders could have achieved on its own.

Private funders can also make a unique contribution by **funding smaller programs and organizations that may struggle to access public funding** due to a lack of capacity or lack of fit with national or international criteria. The Head in the Game program, implemented by Beyond Sport, supports more than 40 local organizations in the United States in accessing grants and capacity building opportunities that promote youth mental wellbeing in sports environments. This approach helps transform local community systems from the ground up, by empowering young people to become agents of change with their sports peers, school friends, and family members.

Many businesses and foundations focus some of their support towards initiatives close to the areas where they operate, providing vital funding to local initiatives. As part of this support, funders should **simplify application processes for grants and funding** to make them more accessible to smaller organizations and community groups driving local change. This includes providing clear guidelines, selection criteria, updates and support throughout the process.

Beyond funding per se, private organizations can also meaningfully contribute through **in-kind donations, capacity building opportunities, skills-based employee volunteering, joint advocacy strategies, and sector-wide thought leadership opportunities**. Their influence can bring meaningful value for policy changes that prioritize youth mental wellbeing. They can act as conveners to accelerate partnerships, knowledge sharing, and collective action. Private organizations can also support the development and piloting of new approaches before they are taken to scale together with public counterparts in the education, sport, or social sectors.

Analysis shows that contributions and donations create broader, deeper impact when partnerships expand to include diverse stakeholders, such as private organizations, the public sector, civil society actors, and young people. These alliances leverage resources, expertise, and networks to consolidate advocacy efforts, solutions design, and program delivery. All stakeholders can jointly activate the same system change initiative or expand and scale existing projects in a sustainable way.

[CS 11] Changing the picture on mental wellbeing for youth in Hong Kong

The **Youth Hub**, an innovative, first-of-its-kind program, brings mental wellbeing into the gaming space and aims to be delivered in 58% of secondary schools in Hong Kong in both English and Chinese. It uses augmented and virtual reality to help students explore and respond to diverse emotions, supported by group discussions. This creates a powerful individual experience while helping to reduce stigma at the scale of classrooms, schools and society as a whole.



Photo caption: The Youth Hub at the Mental Health Association in Hong Kong

Encourage and support programs to collect and share evidence of impact

Crucially, as part of their support, **funders should encourage initiatives to establish robust methods for measuring and reporting the impact of programs.** This evidence is important to maintain the greatest level of accountability and underpin initiatives' future ability to secure funding from public and private bodies and support the overall building of good practice based in evidence.

Join and engage with communities of practice

Many actors benefit from knowing that they are not a drop in the ocean, but part of a larger community of action that has the potential to make a real difference. Organizations like the International [Alliance of Mental Health Research Funders](#) support the ecosystem by **bringing research donors together**, creating shared objectives and disseminating the latest findings and good practices.¹⁴⁵ As more funders recognize the importance of mental wellbeing, it will be important for them to join and contribute to such groups – impacting wider communities and driving change from within their organization too.

[CS 12] UNICEF's Thriving Together and the Global Coalition for Youth Mental Health: Partnering for systemic change

In September 2021, the Z Zurich Foundation and UNICEF launched a global partnership¹⁴⁶ for youth mental health and wellbeing. In three years, the partnership has already positively impacted the lives of more than 900,000 adolescents and caregivers. Renewed in 2024, Thriving Together takes a systems-change approach to preventing mental wellbeing issues and aims to support at least 11 million people by 2027.

At the heart of the Thriving Together partnership are innovative program tools collaboratively developed and field-tested, offering in-person and digital interventions. These tools provide adolescents and caregivers with useful information, skills, and strategies on topics such as emotional regulation, stress management, and problem solving.

To cater to increasing global demand, the partnership is expanding its geographic reach from seven to 15 program countries: Argentina, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, the Maldives, Mexico, Nepal, Pakistan, and Vietnam.

In parallel, Z Zurich Foundation and Zurich Insurance Company launched with UNICEF in April 2022 the UNICEF-led Global Coalition for Youth Mental Health (the Coalition) for increased investment and action. The Coalition is an alliance of UNICEF's key private sector partners committed to addressing the increasing global burden of mental health in children and young people by calling for investment and action on mental health. As of October 2024, the Coalition unites seven leading private sector companies, including Zurich Insurance Company, with more expected to join in the coming years.

Businesses and philanthropic organizations also have a duty to **promote and protect mental wellbeing among their own workforces and through their employees to positively impact their communities**. This goes beyond promoting individual resilience, to addressing drivers of stress on mental wellbeing. Young people beginning their careers can be particularly at risk of being overwhelmed and affected by the stress of work. Furthermore, employees are parents, volunteers, or sport coaches with adolescents and might highly value to promote mental wellbeing in their communities too.



4.6 Recommendations for educational institutions

Embrace mental wellbeing as a core objective of education

Educational institutions occupy a hugely important space in the lives of young people. Secondary schools and higher-education institutions that support youth mental wellbeing can simultaneously build safer spaces for all youth and empower learning environments. Youth mental wellbeing programs can also help to reduce dropout rates, and improve social skills and resilience, which can mitigate the effects of poverty and discrimination in the longer run.¹⁴⁷ Feeling better protected and equipped with social and emotional skills helps students to perform, live, and thrive at their full potential.



Photo credit: UNICEF - VietNam \ Linh Pham

Schools and universities can **take a two-pronged approach to youth mental wellbeing** by building safe spaces for young people to openly discuss their struggles and providing resources and experiences that help them to learn ways to reduce and mitigate mental wellbeing challenges.

School settings can **implement programs that teach mental wellbeing skills** including emotional regulation, coping skills, anxiety management, and resilience as part of the educational curriculum. They can also **train peers as supports** and allocate resources such as employing school-based counsellors to **ensure there is in-school support for young people** who are struggling. And, through outreach programs, they can **develop caregivers' mental wellbeing literacy**. The core principles of mental wellbeing promotion should also be mainstreamed in the teaching methodology and educators' pedagogy to ensure the depth and sustainability of impact.



We need to make a more concerted effort to encourage educational systems and schools to appreciate the benefits of promoting mental health and wellbeing in schools and to embrace mental health and wellbeing as a primary educational objective.

– Dr Carmel Cefai,
Founding Director and Professor,
Centre for Resilience and

Adopt a “mental wellbeing in all education” approach

Universities and colleges, as the bodies responsible for educating future health workers, educators, and professionals, have the opportunity to **incorporate mental wellbeing training into a wide range of curricula** to build a multi-disciplinary body of expertise. This might include creating and **offering specialized courses**, workshops, and certifications in holistic approaches to youth mental wellbeing, and **connecting with public health authorities** to ensure training programs reflect current research and best practice. It can also mean **adopting a “mental wellbeing in all research”** approach, where the mental wellbeing interactions and co-benefits in other disciplines like physical health, pedagogy, sport studies, or sociology are considered.



Photo credit: GOIAS State

[CS 13] Anima – scaling up action on emotional skills

In Brazil, the Z Zurich Foundation partners with the Anima Institute to promote positive students' mental health through Teacher Training Programs on Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). This partnership focuses on transforming how public upper secondary schools embed mental wellbeing in local curricula.

Active in several Brazilian states, the program targets the professional development of teachers and school managers, equipping them with the skills and tools needed to implement emotional literacy effectively in the classroom. They benefit from a pioneering set of modules that holistically develop students' socio-emotional skills and foster mental wellbeing in schools. By empowering educators, the program ensures that students build socio-emotional skills to better navigate stressful and challenging situations in life, while helping breaking down and reducing stigma surrounding mental health within their communities.

Furthermore, the initiative cultivates a supportive culture of mental health within schools by promoting peer-to-peer collaboration among teachers and students. This collaborative approach enhances the overall school environment, fosters a sense of individual purpose, and strengthens the wellbeing of the entire school community.

To align with local needs and schools' call to action, the program has already scaled up its geographic reach and expanded its impact within its first phase.

[CS 14] Tackle Your Feelings Ireland – Promoting mental wellbeing through sports programs

Tackle Your Feelings in Ireland is a program that runs a core campaign with Rugby Players Ireland to promote mental wellbeing in sport, rugby and school communities nationwide. Featuring professional rugby players as role models, it has three main aims: (i) to **reduce** the **stigma** around mental health and increase conversation about it – especially in a community that rarely speaks about it –, (ii) **encourage** young people to **proactively** address mental wellbeing issues, and (iii) **equip** communities with the **tools and resources** to look after their individual and collective emotional wellbeing. Hannah McCormack, the campaign manager, calls it “the strength and conditioning gym of the mental health world”.

With some of Ireland’s sporting community heroes leading the way, including 2023 campaign ambassador **Andrew Porter**, the campaign and its respective programs are projected to impact **270,000 people in different communities around the country**. Having expanded into school and workplace communities, and now with its own community app, the entire program is well on its way to that goal.

Tackle Your Feelings also operates in Australia. There, mental wellbeing promotion sessions are run as part of football and netball programs which, as popular sports, can create change at significant scale and help support system-level change in the long-run. Expert psychologists and sport coaches are central to engage adolescents and young athletes in a learning journey which promotes mental wellbeing both at sport clubs and community levels.



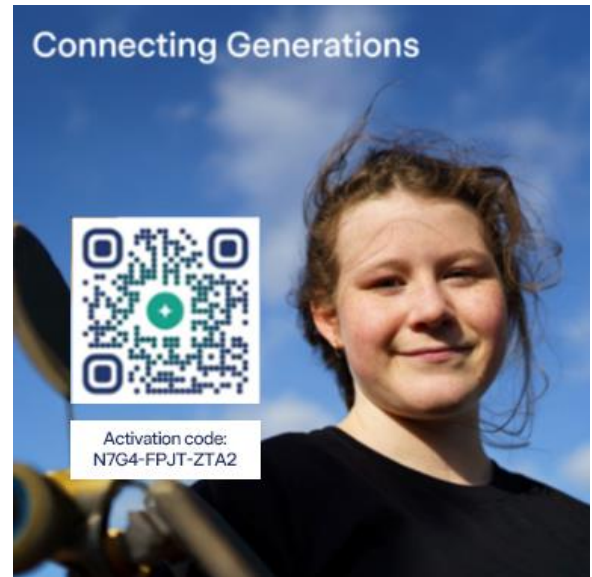
Photo caption: Tackle Your Feelings – Ireland

4.7 Recommendations for parents and caregivers

Equip yourself to best support young people, and urge others to do the same

Parents and caregivers, as all adults involved directly or indirectly with young people, are key in extending community-based mental wellbeing efforts into the home by normalizing open conversations about mental health and wellbeing. As advocates for their children and families, they may promote mental health education and programs that support mental wellbeing within their communities.

The partnership between UNICEF and the Z Zurich Foundation led to creating the Connecting Generations tool. Based on materials developed and being field-tested by UNICEF, and digitalized with the support of LiveWell by Zurich, Connecting Generations is a training tool that equips caregivers with essential resources. It enhances their understanding of adolescents, supports their mental wellbeing, and strengthens connections with the young people they care for. Given its universal relevance, Connecting Generations was adapted to the workplace to engage caregiver employees. Implementing this training at the workplace not only positively impacts mental health in working environments, but also prompts employees to become agents of change for adolescents' mental wellbeing in their own communities. Connecting Generations is currently being implemented by UNICEF in program countries and at workplaces, such as within Business Units of the Zurich Insurance Company. The ambition is to make this tool and training available to a wide range of workplaces in the coming years. You can access it via this QR code:



Engaged caregivers can achieve significant impact by **engaging with policymakers at various levels** – from local to international – demanding that more investment is made in promoting youth mental wellbeing. Their **participation in mental wellbeing literacy programs and other forms of community engagement** can enable them to be active participants in the strengthening of their mental wellbeing of their children and wider communities, as well as carry significant benefits for them as individuals.



Parents and carers often feel really alone... ensuring that they don't feel alone throughout the process is key.

– **Nuala Flewett**,
Head of Participation,
Ambitious about Autism

4.8 Recommendations for young people and youth-led organizations

Keep advocating for the space and respect to be heard in conversations about youth

Many young people and youth organizations have felt let down by their governments and the EU with respect to mental wellbeing.¹⁴⁸ Despite this frustration, young people should feel encouraged to speak up - not only about their feelings and emotions but also about the need to advocate that their mental wellbeing needs to be prioritized by all. It is crucial for young people to **participate in political processes and consultations**, as these play a significant role in shaping policymakers' actions. By engaging in elections, youth can influence and steer the focus of policymakers towards proposals that improve and ensure the prioritization of their mental wellbeing.

At the same time, it is crucial that other stakeholders involve youth in understanding and making decisions about their mental wellbeing. Substantially greater funding and support should be directed towards organizations led and run by youth. At the EU level, for instance, there are several participative initiatives that youth can take part in to make their voices heard, such as the EU's Youth Policy Dialogue.¹⁴⁹

Serve as role models and support for peers using proven approaches based in evidence

Youth themselves have an important responsibility to inform themselves and share evidence-based information. Young people often find themselves as the first point of contact with friends and peers experiencing mental wellbeing challenges. Given the widespread availability of inaccurate and problematic advice in online spaces, which can lead to dangerous outcomes, it is critical that young people can access quality information and resources. This will enable them to help others, as well as themselves.



Influencers can become referencers; role models from which young people can learn positive behaviors and skills.

– **Sandra Camós**,
Director of Education,
Fundación Princesa de Girona



The people who young people will turn to the most at the end of the day is going to be their peers and if their peers are being miseducated, the effect of that will be negative.

– **Diana Chao**,
Founder, Letters to Stranger



Conclusion



Creating the foundation from which Europe can thrive and where we all have a role for youth mental wellbeing

This report by the Z Zurich Foundation lays out a vision for a Europe that actively prioritizes the mental health and wellbeing of young people. It explores what is needed to achieve systemic change in Europe, whether at the regional, national, or local level.

Nearly half of European youth aged 15-29 have unmet mental health needs, compared to 23% of adults.¹⁵⁰ The rise of social media, paired with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, growing insecurities about the future, and continued mental health stigmas have thrust challenges like loneliness, anxiety, and depression into the public spotlight.

The decline in mental wellbeing among youth in the European Union has catastrophic repercussions. The economic burden is estimated to be over €600 billion annually, largely due to reduced productivity, healthcare costs, and social welfare expenditure.¹⁵¹ And there are devastating human costs like diminished quality of life,¹⁵² impaired relationships, reduced employment, and greater financial precarity.

Today's crisis speaks to a wider societal and institutional neglect of mental wellbeing. According to the World Health Organization, in 2020, only 2% of national health budgets on average were spent on mental health globally.¹⁵³ Within this spending, attention and funding remain too focused on treating symptoms. Prevention and promotion programs hold the potential to significantly reduce the need for costly treatment, but not enough is being done to support a preventative approach. The same transition from reactive to proactive action taking place in physical health is needed in how nations and organizations approach youth mental wellbeing.

Prevention and promotion initiatives then become critical levers of systemic change for youth mental health at community, national and EU levels. Promotion initiatives seek to create enabling environments that enhance psychological wellbeing, such as through improving emotional literacy and empowering youth to use positive coping mechanisms. Prevention focuses on identifying and mitigating risk factors for mental health conditions – for specific vulnerable groups or at a population level, addressing determinants of mental health challenges to minimize the onset of conditions.

In the vision of a mentally healthy Europe at the beginning of this paper, Mia's day might seem like an experience that is far away. But her wellbeing throughout the day is impacted by light interventions at every moment. Whether it is through stress management activities in Mia's school, her football team, peers, social media feed, or her family, she has the support she needs at all times. Mental wellbeing is about living a fulfilled life. It includes psychological and social welfare, together with the ability to positively address emotional challenges. Mental wellbeing programming for adolescents is about creating opportunities for them to thrive in all aspects of their life. Emotional literacy, feelings validation, and the existence of support networks always underpin the fulfillment of all life aspects, ranging from physical health to education.

The state of young people's wellbeing is a lot to pin on one actor, but many hands make light work. There are multiple stakeholders that already do positively impact the wellbeing of young people, and this whitepaper aims to equip them with the tools to do so in an informed, well-resourced, proactive, capable, and scalable way. Our vision highlights the need for collective and coordinated efforts to promote resilience, continue breaking down stigma and normalize a proactive approach to mental wellbeing through joint public, private, community, youth-led and civil society actions.

Guided by this vision, and informed by the gaps, challenges, and successes of the current youth mental health landscape, this whitepaper presents an outlook that paves the way to a future in which no young person's mental wellbeing is compromised.

At a policy and funding level, by focusing on proactive measures, Europe can move toward an inclusive model of how mental wellbeing is streamlined and integrated into every aspect of adolescents' lives, fostering resilience and long-term wellbeing among all young people, regardless of who and where they are.

The path to a mentally healthy Europe requires sustained effort and today there are signals that institutions and governments are recognizing the need for greater action. This realization must be matched by action, driven by partnerships to scale the impact of existing initiatives. Partnerships can be about leveraging joint funding, shared advocacy plans, the exchange of knowledge, and new implementation pathways to increase impact in a sustainable way.

The most effective actions and initiatives meet young people where they are, with voices and stories they identify with and relate to, such as the 'Tackle Your Feelings' programs that bolster wellbeing through sport, or the school-based program henka in Spain. Other programs and materials are created with input from lived experience, such as 'Autistic and OK' in the UK. And when a wide range of peers, parents, educators and others are empowered to support young people, they can strengthen the capacity of mental health professionals and scale impact, such as with Por Ti in Portugal and Side by Side Türkiye. The program led by UNICEF in Italy and Poland shows how the Ukraine emergency response is developing into initiatives changing the education and mental health systems at a country level.

When EU-based public, private and civil society stakeholders unite around a shared vision of a positive future for the wellbeing of adolescents, another future can be envisioned for the generations to come. With a clear understanding of the capabilities and resources brought to this effort, everyone is empowered to support mental wellbeing from all angles creating a Europe that can act for a future in which every young person can thrive.

Achieving our goals will require a collective effort. Let us be bold, courageous, and collaborative as we embark on this journey together.



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