

News release

## Mental Health: The Unexplored Side of the 2025 Global Risks Report

**Zurich, January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025 – 12.00 pm CET** — Today, the World Economic Forum released its annual Global Risks Report (GRR), which identifies the most pressing risks across economic, environmental, geopolitical, societal and technological spheres. An area that is not enough in focus in the report is the human cost once these risks materialize and have far-reaching, exacerbating impacts on mental health. This is particularly important as ‘decline in health and wellbeing’ is highlighted as the second most interconnected and influential risk in this year’s GRR.

Gregory Renand, Head of the Z Zurich Foundation, said: “We face an invisible pandemic with the deterioration of mental health, and it is not being properly managed. We strongly believe that prevention is the best form of protection from human, economic, and societal perspectives. We call on all stakeholders to better consider and prioritize mental wellbeing, with a particular focus on the younger generation - who feel increasingly hopeless and burdened - and on prevention and promotion.”

Despite some progress in funding, research and destigmatization, youth mental health is poorly prioritized. Post-COVID-19 increases in mental health issues amid strained healthcare services underscore both the opportunity and urgency to promote mental wellbeing and prevent mental health conditions. In the European Union (EU) for example, declining mental health costs over €600 billion annually in reduced productivity, healthcare and social welfare expenditure,<sup>1</sup> alongside severe human costs such as lower quality of life<sup>2</sup> and impaired relationships. This crisis reflects societal neglect, as only 2% of national health budgets were spent on mental health globally in 2020,<sup>3</sup> focusing mainly on treatment rather than prevention and promotion.

Against this backdrop, the Z Zurich Foundation released a new whitepaper today, ‘A vision for youth mental wellbeing in Europe’. Supported by extensive research and expertise, it outlines a future within Europe where youth mental wellbeing is a priority and offers perspectives on how it can be achieved. In particular, the report assesses the current state of youth mental wellbeing in the EU, identifies existing gaps to a more resilient future, and provides actionable steps and recommendations for respective stakeholders - from policy makers to the private sector, NGOs, caregivers and young people themselves.

Some of the key findings from the European Union include:

- More than 1 in 6 young people struggle with their mental health.<sup>4</sup>
- 49% of youth reported unmet needs in mental health care.<sup>5</sup>
- Suicide is the second leading cause of premature death among youth aged 15-19.<sup>6</sup>

Key actionable steps for all stakeholders include how to:

- Rebalance prioritization and funding to support a range of universal and targeted prevention and promotion programs for all youth and the most vulnerable groups.
- Integrate prevention and promotion for mental wellbeing in all areas of policymaking and government action - e.g. education, health, social affairs.
- Identify context specific delivery mechanisms - e.g. school systems, sport networks, digital prevention campaigns - to create sustainable impact at scale.
- 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.
- Expand data collection on youth mental wellbeing, recognizing the value of different forms of data, impact metrics and evidence.

While the focus of this whitepaper are the countries and stakeholders within the EU, it draws on best practices from numerous existing and effective youth mental wellbeing programs around the world, that demonstrate the potential for measurable positive change.

Gregory Renand continued: “An important number of initiatives in support to youth mental wellbeing have proven their effectiveness and are scalable. This is our collective opportunity today. Our report aims to inform readers,

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<sup>1</sup> Amand-Eeckhout, 2023. Mental health in the EU. European Parliamentary Research Service. Access [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> Cardoso, F., and McHayle, Z., 2024. The economic and social costs of mental ill health. Centre for Mental Health. Access [here](#).

<sup>3</sup> WHO. 2021. Mental Health Atlas 2020. Access [here](#).

<sup>4</sup> Health at a Glance: Europe 2022, 2022. OECD. Access [here](#).

<sup>5</sup> Mental health, 2024. European Council. Council of the European Union. Access [here](#).

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF, 2021. On My Mind: Promoting, protecting and caring for children’s mental health. Access [here](#).

empower them and call for shared actions that build momentum toward a Europe that invests in the mental wellbeing of its youth – not just for the economic benefits, but for the brighter, more resilient future it promises.”

Sarah Kline, CEO & Co-founder of United for Global Mental Health, added: “Fostering environments that promote youth mental health and wellbeing help build a stronger, more resilient world for everyone. This whitepaper sets out crucial steps that can help create a supportive ecosystem for youth mental health and wellbeing in Europe. We must ensure young people everywhere can access the support they need to thrive in a fast-moving environment.”

[Download the whitepaper “A vision for youth mental wellbeing in Europe” on Z Zurich Foundation’s website.](#)

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### **About the Z Zurich Foundation**

The Z Zurich Foundation is a Swiss-based charitable foundation established by members of the Zurich Insurance Group. It is the main vehicle by which Zurich Insurance Group delivers on its global community investment strategy.

At the Z Zurich Foundation, we believe in a world where young people have the tools and resources to improve their mental wellbeing. Throughout the 30+ programs we support globally, we aim to create a mental wellbeing movement that is helping young people see their feelings for what they are, so they can prevent stress from developing into anxiety.

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. The Z Zurich Foundation works alongside Zurich Insurance Group employees and other stakeholders as well as with governments and NGOs in pursuit of a future where people can thrive in the face of increasing climate hazards, where those of us feeling the stresses of life are empowered to speak up, and where the marginalized in our society can reach their full potential.

Visit the Z Zurich Foundation’s website to learn more about its work: <https://zurich.foundation>. Follow the Z Zurich Foundation on [LinkedIn](#), [X/Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).