



**ICSW EUROPE NEWSLETTER**

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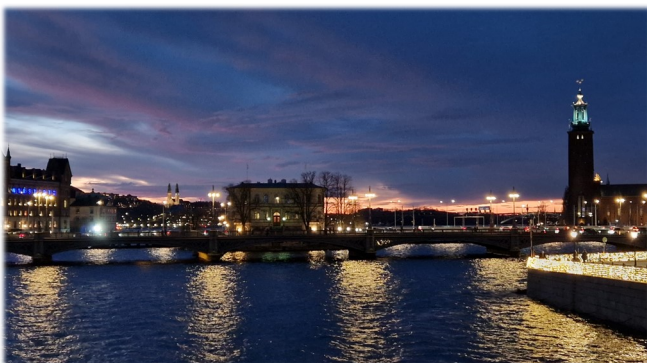
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Afternoon light in Stockholm

*author of the photo: © Max Rubisch*

## A Message from the President



Dear readers of our Newsletter,

ICSW Europe concluded the old year with an Expert Seminar and our annual General Assembly. On 29 November 2024, together with ICSW Sweden we held a scientific Seminar in Stockholm on “**Mental Health – Human Rights and Participation**”.

It was a very interesting meeting: first we heard *Karl Lavò* from GAMIAN (a European NGO on mental health in Brussels) speaking about the general situation of mental health in Europe and the initiatives of the European Commission. *Kristian Wahlbeck* from the organization MIELI – Mental health Finland and *Marten Jansson* from NSPH, the Swedish Partnership for Mental Health, spoke about the social and economic determinants of mental health, especially the issues of participation and life quality. *Loes Vollenbroek* from Sweden and *Jeroen de Haan-Rissmann* from the Netherlands presented interesting projects of active participation. These are projects where persons with their own experience of mental health problems can help other people in their process of rehabilitation and inclusion into society. Finally, *Nicola Byrne* and *Gloria Kirwan* from the Irish organisation SHINE reported on current developments in Ireland, especially on reducing stigma and the “Green Ribbon Campaign”. It was really good to hear two so engaged experts from our new member organisation in Ireland.

All in all, it was an excellent Seminar combining scientific presentations, speeches from persons representing NGO's active in this field and contributions of persons who spoke about their own experiences of mental health problems.

The second event in Stockholm was our Annual **General Assembly**, held on 30 November 2024 in the building of the Salvation Army.

*Irene Köhler* from Austria presented the results of the election of the Board members. In 2025 and 2026 our Board will consist of the following persons: *Max*

*Rubisch* (president), *Jean-Michel Hôte* (treasurer), *Jukka Haapakoski*, *Kathleen Wabrowetz* and as a new member *Axel Ågren* from Sweden.

I am sorry that *Alina Petrauskienė* from Lithuania – our host at the Seminar and the GA one year ago in Vilnius – has left the Board. I thank her very much for her great work and her commitment to ICSW Europe.

After the formal part of the GA we had an open discussion about the development of ICSW, especially about the problem of membership and the communication between the Global level and the Regional level. It was underlined that we have a great potential of experts and that we can use a niche in the area of social policy. Especially in our time when international institutions come under pressure, a network as ours is very important. But what is our impact? We have very good and interesting seminars, but the question is: What happens after the meetings?

We decided to create a working group of three persons to discuss these questions in more detail and to elaborate proposals. The main issues are:

- how to improve the communication within ICSW;
- how to find new members and to keep the existing members and
- how to reach more relevance at the political level.

I think the composition of the group is very well balanced: a person with a very long experience in ICSW (*Eva Holmberg - Herrström* from Sweden, a former ICSW President), a colleague who is a Board member since two years (*Jukka Haapakoski* from Finland) and a representative from our youngest member organisation (*Nicola Byrne* from Ireland). I am looking forward to the ideas they will forward to our Board. We will discuss them and bring them to the Global level.

I want to thank our Swedish colleagues for their excellent work in preparing and organizing the seminar and the GA and for their great hospitality in Stockholm!

I wish you all the best for the new year 2025 – may it be a healthy and peaceful year for all of us!

**Max Rubisch**  
President of ICSW Europe

## ICSW Europe Scientific Seminar



ICSW Europe 2024 Scientific Seminar named “Mental Health – Human Rights and Participation” organised in cooperation with ICSW Sweden took place on Friday, **29 November 2024** (from 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) in Ersta Institution located in Södermalm, Stockholm, Sweden.

Speakers who presented their contributions were *Karl Lavò* (Senior Policy, Projects and EU Liaison Officer), *Kristian Wahlbeck* (Senior Advisor, MIELI Mental Health Finland), *Loes Vollenbroek* (Peer Support, Sweden), *Jeroen de Haan-Rissmann* (Peer support, Movisie, Holland), *Mårten Jansson* (Researcher NSPH, Sweden), *Nicola Byrne*, CEO of Shine and *Dr Gloria Kirwan* (Senior Lecturer in the Graduate School of Healthcare Management in the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI), University of Medicine and Health Sciences, Ireland).

Introductory words and opening belonged to *Eva Holmberg-Herrström* (ICSW Sweden, former Global President) and *Max Rubisch* (President of ICSW Europe). *Axel Ågren* (President of ICSW Sweden) was a moderator of the Seminar.

After the first part of the Seminar, small discussing groups were formed from the present participants and they were debating the following questions:

- 1) What are the challenges from what you have heard today?
- 2) Proposals for the future? Who should they be addressed to (UN, EU, Governments, NGOs, Regional/Local Authorities, others)?

The outcomes of the discussions were presented at the end of the Seminar.

More information on the website: [www.icsw.org](http://www.icsw.org)



Participants of the Seminar



Discussions in groups

*author of the text and photos: Editor of ICSW Europe NL*

## ICSW Europe 2024 General Assembly

ICSW Europe 2024 General Assembly (GA) took place on **30 November 2024, Saturday** at 10:00-12:00 CET; 12:30-14:30 CET in the building of Salvation Army (Frälsningsarmen), Stockholm, Sweden.

### Agenda of the GA

- 1) Opening and Checking of Voting Rights (paid-up members)
- 2) Approval of the Minutes of the GA on 1 December 2023
- 3) Election of ICSW Europe Board members 2025-2026, (for approval and decision) – results of electronic voting

- 4) Presentation of ICSW Europe Annual Activity Report 2024
- 5) Report of 2024 from the Treasurer (for adoption and discharging of responsibility, after the auditors have made their comments)
- 6) Statement by Auditors for 2024 accounts (for approval and decision)
- 7) Election of Auditors and Election Committee members (2 year terms)
- 8) Updating of the Budget for 2024 and Budget for 2025
- 9) Discussion about the Development of ICSW
- 10) Any Other Matters Arising
- 11) Closing the General Assembly



author of the text and photo: Editor of ICSW Europe NL

**Expert Seminar:  
“Mental Health – Human Rights and Participation”  
speakers and abstracts**

**A General review of the situation in Europe**



**Karl Lavò**

Senior Policy,  
Projects and EU  
Liaison Officer

*Karl Lavò* is a political and social scientist with a background in politics, international relations, and policy analysis. He previously worked at the OECD before taking on his current role at GAMIAN-Europe, where he serves as the Senior Policy, Projects, and EU Liaison Officer. His work focuses on advocacy with MEPs and various EU institutions, overseeing mental health projects in areas such as cancer, AI, and art, as well as analysing EU-level statistics and policies related to mental health conditions and overall mental well-being.

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This presentation examines the current state of mental health in Europe, focusing on prevalence rates, vulnerable groups, and systemic challenges such as stigma, disparities in healthcare provision, and the impact of societal changes. It highlights EU-level initiatives, including funding programmes and policy frameworks like the Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health, as well as the European Parliament's efforts to prioritise mental health. The discussion underscores the need for collaborative action and innovative solutions to address emerging challenges, including the role of technology and environmental factors in mental health.

## The big picture of societal issues in mental health



**Kristian Wahlbeck**

Senior Advisor,  
MIELI Mental Health  
Finland

Professor *Kristian Wahlbeck*, is a psychiatrist and psychotherapist with more than twenty years' experience of policy development, monitoring and evaluation at the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL). He has led several European research and development projects. He is the Lead Advisor for MIELI Mental Health, the leading national mental health CSO in Finland, and has published more than 150 original papers with an h-index of 75.

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Mental health is a state of well-being, relevant for every individual, family and community. Mental health is deeply interconnected with societal structures, often influenced by stigma, accessibility, socioeconomic disparities, and cultural norms. In a longitudinal perspective, mental health is highly intergenerational and formed during the early years of life. Socio-economic determinants of mental health include poverty, systemic inequalities and social inclusion as well as war and conflict. Most of the mental health determinants are outside the health sector, which necessitate the Mental health in all policies approach to promote population mental health. Policies need to build on the principles laid out in the UN Convention on Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD).

Psychological distress and mental health problems are continuously increasing. Countries thus face increase in demand for mental health services, increase in sick leaves and disability pensions due to mental disorders, increased exclusion from labour market of people with severe mental disorders. This means a growing negative economic impact of mental disorders (5% of GDP in many countries). Causes of deterioration of mental health include negative impact of digital media, stressors in schools and work life, urban stressors, aftermath of the corona pandemic and an

increasing individualistic life style. Protective factors of mental health, such as participation, inclusion, autonomy and community factors need to be strengthened.

## A Swedish project "Värdefullt". Active participation in the rehabilitation.



**Loes Vollenbroek**

Peer Support, Sweden

*Loes Vollenbroek* has worked for the past 10 years, professionally as well as in volunteer organisations, in mental health projects, organisations and development groups. With own experience of mental diagnoses and problems as a corner stone and works amongst others as Peer Support. Interest and working areas also include (cognitive) accessibility, disability, and minority groups. *Loes Vollenbroek* has a university background with a Master's degree in sociology and psychology of Media and Society as well as a Master's degree in Genderstudies.

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An insight view on participation in the Swedish project "Värdefullt" (Valuable). From 2013 till 2015 Värdefullt participants, who all had experience of mental health problems and recovery, described, communicated and conveyed their own lived experiences to those who work with people with mental health problems. The project leader, participants, guest speakers and teachers all had own lived experience of mental health issues and the whole project had as little involvement of (health care) professionals as possible. Not only did this result in two book publications, seminars, development groups and reading groups, it also created (unexpected) ripple effects such as assignments outside the project, the start of a local non-profit organisation and five participants that got jobs as Peer Support or similar functions.

## The work of a peer support



**Jeroen de Haan-Rissmann**

Peer support, Movisie,  
Holland

*Jeroen de Haan-Rissmann* (Utrecht, 1967) worked in education and the music industry, but in 2010 he decided to work on his experiences with domestic violence (as a child) and being a client in psychiatry. Since 2021, he has combined his work as an expert by experience at the Movisie knowledge institute with working in practice at Ixta Noa in Nijmegen.

*Jeroen de Haan-Rissmann* talks about the development of experiential expertise in the Netherlands since he entered the profession in 2010. He takes us through what it takes to make a good start when collaborating with experienced experts.

*Jeroen de Haan-Rissmann* reflects on the substantive side of the profession, the layering of experiences to experiential knowledge to experiential expertise, and gives an example of valuable application of experiential expertise in his work practice at Ixta Noa: peer support.

## Participation and life quality



**Mårten Jansson**  
Researcher NSPH, Sweden

*Mårten Jansson* has worked for The Swedish Partnership for Mental Health since 2010. In recent years, he has been responsible for several large projects

to gather patients' and relatives' experiences of forensic psychiatric care, compulsory care, emergency psychiatric care, etc.

The Swedish Partnership for Mental Health is a network of organizations for patients, users and family carers in the mental health field. In early 2024 they conducted a survey with more than 2,300 responses on how people with mental illness and their relatives experience their living conditions; social networks, finances, experience of quality of life, care and other support.

**Creating a more compassionate Ireland where those affected by mental illness and stigma are supported and included in all aspects of society: Experience and Insights**



**Nicola Byrne**  
CEO of Shine

*Nicola Byrne* is the CEO of Shine, a national organisation that provides information and support for people affected by mental health difficulties in Ireland. She is also a registered Social Worker with over 25 years of experience in the mental health sector, working in various roles such as practice, policy, research, advocacy, change management, operations, strategy and service delivery. She is passionate about promoting individual and family recovery, challenging stigma and discrimination, and influencing positive change in mental health policy and practice. Nicola is an experienced leader who strives to make Shine a voice for mental health in Ireland. Under her leadership, the charity Shine operates frontline services for people with lived experience and their supporter and delivers several important national programmes including the national stigma reduction programme (See Change) and Ireland's national programme for responsible reporting and representation of mental health in the media (Headline).



**Gloria Kirwan**  
RCSI

Dr *Gloria Kirwan* is Senior Lecturer in the Graduate School of Healthcare Management in the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI), University of Medicine and Health Sciences, Ireland. She is also a registered social worker with extensive experience working in community development roles, mental health services and services for children and families. *Gloria* is actively involved in a number of national, voluntary sector organisations, including, as Company Director of the homelessness organisation Focus Ireland; as Chairperson of the Quality Assurance and Risk Committee of Family Carers Ireland; as Trustee of GAPS UK (Group for the Advancement of Psychodynamics and Psychotherapy in Social Work); and, as a member and active supporter of Shine. *Gloria* is Editor of three journals, namely, the Irish Social Worker (Journal of the Irish Association of Social Workers), the Journal of Social Work Practice (Taylor & Francis) and Groupwork (Whiting & Birch). Her research and publications mainly focus on health inclusion, promoting self-determination for all, and participation in society as a human right.

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Stigma surrounding mental illness continues to undermine the inclusion, wellbeing, and rights of individuals across Ireland. This presentation explores how collective efforts can address these challenges and foster a society where all are supported and valued. The presentation sets the scene with an overview of mental health in Ireland, including key trends and challenges, and examine evidence-based approaches to combatting stigma. Drawing from research, Dr. *Kirwan's* research highlights the impact of stigma on individuals' lived experiences, focusing on areas such as identity, social inclusion, and access to care. The presentation also spotlights Shine's initiatives to reduce stigma, including the national stigma reduction programme, and discusses how advocacy, public engagement, and targeted interventions can drive societal transformation.

Through this session, attendees gain actionable insights into reducing stigma and promoting mental health equity, empowering communities, practitioners, and policymakers to contribute to a more compassionate Ireland that ultimately increases recovery rates and reduces suicide rates.

## ICSW Europe Members



### Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council

In 1973, the Pancyprian Welfare Council was established, when the need for coordination of voluntary organizations, policy making in the field of voluntary social welfare and responsible cooperation with the competent services of the Republic of Cyprus in the formulation and implementation of the social policy of the state was identified.

The substantial contribution of the Council in its area of competence, led to the introduction of a new legal framework and status for the Council, with the enactment of the “Pancyprian Welfare Council Law” (152/89).

The Council's successful course of action and the expansion of the voluntary sector indicated the need for a revised legal framework so that the Council could respond more effectively to its role and responsibilities.

Hence, in 2006 the “Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council Law 61(I)/2006” was passed, which replaced the Pancyprian Welfare Council Law. Since then, the Council was renamed as the Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council [PVCC]

and acting as the Supreme Coordinating Body of NGOs and voluntary service.

Find us on our [website](#).

### **Governing bodies of PVCC**

The governing bodies of PVCC consist of the General Assembly which takes all the institutional decisions of the Council, the Steering Committee which is the highest administrative body of the Council and consists of representatives of the member organisations of the Council and the Executive Secretariat which consists of the officials of the Steering Committee.

### **Members of PVCC**

The member organisations of PVCC represent a wide range of civil society interests. They operate programs, provide services and contribute to various issues that concern modern society. They are active in various fields: welfare, health, social cohesion, culture, sports, justice, environment, animal welfare, humanitarian aid, human rights, education, etc.

They form a rich landscape of organised structures consisting of coordinating councils, associations, organisations, foundations/unions, networks, federations, confederations, Community Councils/Volunteering Committees, etc., which serve different purposes and are active in various policy areas.

PVCC coordinates and supports all organised groups to ensure a favorable and supportive operating environment.

More information [here](#).

### **Policy making**

The PVCC engages in policy making activity in volunteerism and NGO issues, as defined by the Law governing its establishment. Key activities involve:

- active contribution to the planning, the charting and the formulation of social policy of the Republic of Cyprus;
- coordination of the activities and the planning of its members, as well as coordination among the members and between members and the competent services of the state;
- charting of policy and strategy for the achievement of the short-term and long-term

objectives in the field of volunteerism and social welfare;

- charting the short-term, middle-term and long-term plan of action in the field of volunteerism and social welfare, in cooperation with the competent services of the Republic, or with any state, semi-state or non government agency;
- submitting reports, views, suggestions, memorandums and action plans to the competent services of the Republic, in connection with the charting, formulation, running and implementation of the policy of the Republic in the field of volunteerism and social welfare.

### **Dialogues with ministries and NGOs**

The PVCC organises annual dialogues between ministries, deputy ministries and NGOs to discuss and resolve issues concerning NGOs.

[In 2024 the dialogues were held on 20 February – Dialogue with the Ministry of Interior and NGOs, on 11 July – Dialogue with the Minister of Health and NGOs and on 27 September – Dialogue with the Deputy Minister of Social Welfare and NGOs.]

### **Elders' Parliament**

The institution of the Elders' Parliament is organised annually by the PVCC since 1999 at the House of Representatives.

#### **Purposes:**

- Active contribution to social reflection and promotion of the problems of older people in decision-making centres.
- Joining the forces of organised groups from the broad spectrum of civil society, to strengthen, among other things, pluralism.
- Strengthening the active participation of the elderly and participatory democracy.
- Recognition and utilization of the contribution and accumulated experience of the elderly. Collective promotion of the issues of the elderly through the podium of the House of Representatives.

More information read [here](#).



## Civil Society Assembly

The Assembly is a pioneering initiative organised annually since 2011 by the PVCC. The Assembly aims to give a “voice” to NGOs at the House of Representatives.

At the Assembly, 56 representatives of voluntary organisations/NGOs have the status of an “MP” and participate in the discussion and work of the Session in the presence of state and other officials.

More information about [Civil Society Assembly/Parliament](#).

## Promoting Volunteerism/Main Campaigns Volunteerism Week 1-8 of December

Volunteering Week was established in 1994 by the PVCC to recognize the International Volunteer Day (December 5th) which was designated by a resolution of the UN General Assembly in 1985. The purpose of the Volunteering Week is to recognise the contribution of volunteers and voluntary organisations/NGOs to society, to mobilise the whole society to carry out voluntary actions and to promote the principles and values of volunteering.

More information on the [Programme](#) (in Greek).

## Volunteer Centre – Central coordinating body of volunteering

Established – in 1991

It operates – by the District Volunteerism Coordinative Councils, with the coordination of the PVCC.

- Informs volunteers (opportunities, rights, responsibilities);
- registers volunteers;
- trains and supports volunteers;
- matches volunteers with needs/volunteer opportunities;
- recognises and certifies volunteer service;
- identifies volunteering opportunities/needs;
- operates with procedures & protocols;
- works with professionals of various specialties;
- implements a quality system;
- operates with confidentiality and protects personal data.

Become a volunteer or find volunteering opportunities at the [Volunteering](#).

## Campaigns for the Support of vulnerable groups

Safeguarding human dignity, combating poverty, social exclusion as well as any form of inequity and discrimination are all part of our collective responsibilities.

The PVCC implements targeted actions and campaigns to support vulnerable groups.

More information ([Campaigns “Adopt” a Family for Christmas/Easter, Back to School Campaign](#))

## Competitions/Programmes promoting volunteerism Program Youth & Volunteerism

The program and the competition is an initiative of the PVCC which has been implemented since 2005 with the support and cooperation of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth.

*Implementation:* At all levels of educational institutions.

*Objectives:*

The involvement of management/administration, teachers and pupils/students in voluntary projects

- The mobilisation of teachers to plan and undertake voluntary projects throughout the educational year.
- The creation of Social/Voluntary Groups and Clubs.
- The participation of children and young people in voluntary actions.
- Cultivating the principles and values of volunteering and active citizenship.
- The development of a sense of social responsibility for the benefit of society.

*Awards:* The winners participate at the International Volunteer Day ceremony, hosted by the Presidential couple, every December at the Presidential Palace and receive their awards.



Volunteering for health

## Pancyprian Student Competition

The Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council launches a Pancyprian Student Competition, for the three grades of Gymnasium and the first and second grades of lyceums and Technical and Vocational Schools of Education and Training, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth.

Categories: Poster, Article, Advertising Post

The three best projects from each category for Gymnasiums and Lyceums/T.E.S.E.K. respectively (selected by a Special Committee of the Ministry of Education Sports and Youth), receive the awards at a special ceremony organised by the PVCC and the Ministry.

## Corporate Volunteerism and Volunteering Competition

The Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council organizes the annual competition “Corporate Volunteerism and Volunteering” and invites public and private companies, which meet the objectives of the competition, to submit their participation.

The purpose of the competition is to award companies' good practices/actions developed in the fields of corporate/employee volunteering and volunteerism that contribute to the improvement of the problems faced by society and/or to the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, and/or to the cooperation and support to voluntary organisations/NGOs.



3/12/2024

*Awards: Reception at the Presidential Palace*

*photo: The President of the Republic of Cyprus and the President of the PVCC award the winners of the competition.*

*author of the text: PVCC (Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council. [Email]. [cit 2025-1-17].*

Eurochild

Eurochild

## Children's Realities in Europe: Progress & Gaps

### Eurochild 2024 flagship report on children in need across Europe

This report compiles information from 57 Eurochild members in 31 countries across Europe and provides an overview of children's realities in these countries. The report aims to identify good and promising practices, working solutions, and country-specific recommendations for EU decision-makers and national governments to draw from when addressing children's needs.

Eurostat reports that in 2023, 24.8% of children in the European Union faced the risk of poverty or social exclusion. This troubling figure highlights the persistence of high child poverty levels in one of the world's wealthiest regions. Child poverty rates rose in 16 EU countries, while 9 saw decreases. Romania recorded the highest proportion of children at risk (39%), followed by Spain (34.5%) and Bulgaria (33.9%).

Several countries have made significant strides in their commitment to children's rights, but many still need to intensify their efforts to address the pressing challenges faced by children today. Gaps in addressing issues like climate change, mental health and digital safety persist, requiring urgent attention from the new EU and national political leadership. Children and young people face mental health challenges and financial barriers to education, with inadequate support services and a lack of trained staff, particularly for disadvantaged, migrant, and LGBTQ+ children.

## Our Policy Recommendations:

- Uphold the rights of all children
- Combat poverty and social exclusion
- Strengthen child protection systems
- Guarantee children's right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment
- Support children's mental health
- Support children's rights in the digital sphere
- Strengthen the European Child Guarantee
- Leverage the European Semester Process

Overall, our report highlights concerning setbacks. While policies often exist, they are rarely implemented effectively or supported with adequate funding.

[Read the full report and see how your country is doing](#)

(source: Eurochild: Children's Realities in Europe: Progress & Gaps. [online]. [cit. 2025-1-20]. Available at: <<https://eurochild.org/resource/childrens-realities-in-europe-progress-gaps/>>)



**AGE Platform**

## Join the Effort to Combat Ageism and Age Discrimination in the EU

AGE Platform supports an important study on discrimination on the grounds of age in the EU initiated by DG JUST. **If you have experienced any kind of age discrimination or ageism** as an individual or as part of a CSO working on these issues, support us in shaping the understanding and future policies around age equality.

[Take part in the survey](#)

(source: AGE Platform Europe: Join the Effort to Combat Ageism and Age Discrimination in the EU. [online]. [cit. 2025-1-20]. Available at: <<https://www.age-platform.eu/join-the-effort-to-combat-ageism-and-age-discrimination-in-the-eu/>>)

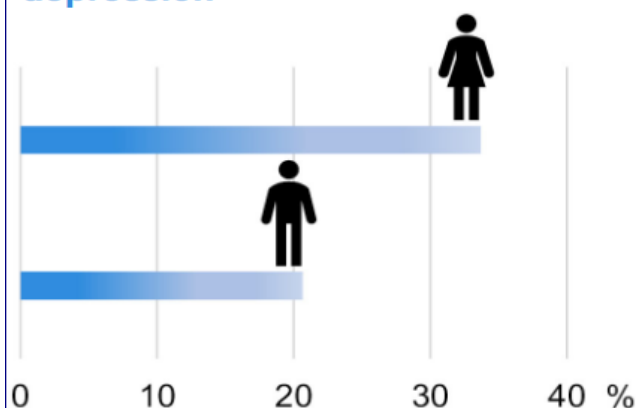
UNECE



UNECE

## Mental Health of Older People

### Many older persons are affected by depression



Source: Based on data for 27 European countries and the United States from the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) and the Health and Retirement Study (HRS).

### Suggested strategies:

- Address specific needs of older persons in mental health policies
- Eliminate stigma and improve mental health literacy
- Combat ageism
- Invest in prevention and early detection
- Tackle psychosocial challenges in work and care
- Support older persons during challenging life events
- Integrate mental health services into primary and long-term care
- Improve access to treatment for mental health care
- Protect mental health of older persons in emergencies
- Enhance research and data collection on mental health of older persons

A significant share of older persons is affected by mental disorders with a concerning increase in prevalence in recent years. Loneliness, a major risk factor, impacts up to 30 per cent of older persons in some countries, further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, mental health conditions among older persons often go unnoticed and untreated. This is due to a combination of factors, including the fact that symptoms of mental disorders among older persons are often overlooked due to other physical or cognitive limitations or dismissed as a normal part of ageing. This is particularly the case for older women, older persons with lower socio-economic status as well as those living in long-term care facilities.

### **Policy challenge**

Effectively promoting, protecting, and caring for the mental health of older persons requires addressing several challenges. This involves closing the significant treatment gap, which leaves a majority of mental health conditions among older persons untreated. It also requires mitigating the negative impacts of poor mental health on older persons and their families, while protecting vulnerable groups like those in long-term care facilities. Due to the multiple and intersecting factors putting older persons from disadvantaged backgrounds at a greater risk of mental disorders, addressing the wider social disparities in mental health is equally important. Improving mental health of older persons is a human rights imperative. It will also contribute in many ways to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being at all ages.

### **Policy strategies to improve the mental health of older persons**

#### **Addressing barriers for older persons to seek help by combating ageism, eliminating stigma and improving mental health literacy**

Older persons face a double burden in mental health due to stigma surrounding mental illness and ageism. This creates barriers to accessing adequate treatment and negatively impacts their mental health. Effective policy strategies aimed at eliminating stigma and increasing mental health literacy include raising awareness about common mental health conditions

among older persons, their symptoms, and available resources for support. To combat ageism a series of evidence-based strategies are available, including enforcing policies and legislation to combat age discrimination, implementing educational initiatives, and promoting intergenerational contact programmes.

### **Investing in prevention and early detection**

Prevention and early detection play fundamental roles in mitigating the onset and progression of mental health disorders among older persons. Promoting healthy lifestyles, regular physical activity, and mental well-being throughout life can significantly enhance mental well-being in older age, building a foundation for resilience. Furthermore, systematic screening programmes within health-care settings, especially when targeted at those with increased risk, can be effective to identify mental health issues at an early stage.

### **Improving access to treatment**

Improving mental health-care access for older adults requires the integration of mental health services into primary care and the training of health-care professionals in geriatric mental health. Expanding telehealth options can further increase accessibility. Talk therapy can effectively address common issues like anxiety and depression. Furthermore, overcoming barriers like cost, distance, and provider shortages is crucial. Integrating mental health services into long-term care facilities and developing specialized services for older persons affected by mental health conditions and other chronic conditions like dementia or cognitive impairment ensure that they receive tailored support that addresses their specific needs.

### **Providing support at work and during challenging life events**

Challenging life events include forced retirement, becoming a caregiver, bereavement, severe illness, institutionalization, as well as emergencies. Counselling specifically tailored to the situations faced by older adults can provide important support. Other measures include support groups, individual therapy sessions, and educational resources to help navigate these complex situations and build resilience when faced with life challenges.

## Enhancing research and data collection

Strengthening the evidence base through robust data collection and research on mental health challenges specific to older populations is key for informing policy decisions and assessing progress. Additional research on the effectiveness of mental health interventions for older persons as well as possible side effects of medications can ensure that older persons receive support that is evidence-based and that protects them from adverse effects of medications.

## Recommendations

The mental health of older persons is influenced by the accumulation of experiences and challenges encountered throughout life, including in later life. Therefore, a life course approach to mental health is important.

However, older persons face unique mental health challenges because of intersecting vulnerabilities and challenges related to loss of functional and cognitive capacity, loss of social connections and bereavement, among others. Mental health policies should therefore include targeted strategies that address these specific needs. Numerous concrete examples of such targeted strategies are featured in the full version of this Policy Brief.

Collaboration among diverse stakeholders and the involvement of older persons with mental health conditions in decision-making will ensure inclusive policies that address social inequalities, promoting good mental health and dignified lives for all older persons.

*(source: UNECE: Policy Brief on Ageing N° 29 issued on 18 June 2024 during the 17th Session of the Standing Working Group on Ageing (SWG-A) within the MIPAA process (implementation of the Madrid International Plan on Ageing)*

## Council of Europe



## CINGO's autumn session



At its Autumn session held from 14 to 16 October, the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (CINGO), among other decisions:

- adopted its three-yearly strategy for 2024-27;
- adopted a Youth Strategy and a Gender Equality Strategy;
- approved the creation of a new Committee for the European Social Charter and its monitoring mechanisms;
- adopted a “Recommendation on history education in Europe”.

It held exchanges with Mr *Gianluca Esposito*, Director General of Human Rights and Rule of Law (DG I), Ms *Aoife Nolan*, Chairperson of the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) and Ms *Urška Umek*, Head of Democratic Institutions and Civil Society, on ways to increase interactions between CINGO and Council of Europe bodies and activities in the field of standard setting, monitoring and cooperation projects, in line with the Reykjavik process and the Secretary General's Roadmap on engagement with civil society. On this occasion, it welcomed the appointment of a

central contact person for civil society in DG I and invited all INGOs to encourage their governments to participate to the fullest extent in the system of the European Social Charter and CINGO also heard an update on recent activities and future reports of its Expert Council on NGO Law, including the preparation of its next periodic report on developments in standards, mechanisms and case law related to NGOs in Europe. It agreed that additional efforts will be deployed to increase the visibility and recognition of the Expert Council's important work in the current context.

The list of decisions and documents adopted at the session are published on the [webpage of the session](#) as they become available.

The next session is scheduled to take place on 7-9 April 2025.

### [Agenda of the Session](#)

*(source: Conference of INGOs: Conference of INGOs – Newsroom. [online]. [cit. 2025-1-20]. Available at: <[https://www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/newsroom/-/asset\\_publisher/hfD3dljjiyUCJ/content/future-priorities-interactions-with-the-council-of-europe-new-committee-for-the-european-social-charter-history-education-and-other-highlights-of-cingo-s-autumn-session%C2%A0?\\_com\\_liferay\\_asset\\_publisher\\_web\\_portlet\\_AssetPublisherPortlet\\_INSTANCE\\_hfD3dljjiyUCJ\\_assetEntryId=273669561](https://www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/newsroom/-/asset_publisher/hfD3dljjiyUCJ/content/future-priorities-interactions-with-the-council-of-europe-new-committee-for-the-european-social-charter-history-education-and-other-highlights-of-cingo-s-autumn-session%C2%A0?_com_liferay_asset_publisher_web_portlet_AssetPublisherPortlet_INSTANCE_hfD3dljjiyUCJ_assetEntryId=273669561)>*

**CECOP**



### **Navigating the Implementation of the Platform Work Directive: Challenges and Opportunities, the Cooperative Perspective**

[On 14 October 2024, the European Council adopted the Platform Work Directive. The new rules will improve working conditions for more than 28 million people working in platform work across the EU. Member States now have two years to implement the directive into national law. This is a great step towards a fairer platform economy and a great opportunity for Platform Cooperatives to thrive].

For the occasion, CECOP organised on 28 October a webinar on the challenges and opportunities created by the implementation of the recently adopted Platform work Directive.

CECOP organised this webinar to raise awareness of the potential impacts of the Directive on cooperatives, inviting stakeholders to share their perspectives. The session included insights from Eurofound, the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), CECOP's Spanish member COCETA, and Club VTC, a cooperative of independent workers.

### [Read about the webinar](#)

*(source: CECOP Europe: Webinar “Navigating the implementation of the Platform work Directive: challenges and opportunities, the cooperative perspective”. [online]. [cit. 2025-1-20]. Available at: <<https://cecop.coop/works/webinar-navigating-the-implementation-of-the-platform-work-directive-challenges-and-opportunities-the-cooperative-perspective>>)*

# International Federation of Social Workers



## The 2025 World Social Work Day Theme Announced

The International Association of Schools of Social Work, the International Council of Social Welfare and IFSW have jointly announced the 2025 World Social Work Day theme:

**“Strengthening Intergenerational Solidarity for Enduring Wellbeing”.**



The theme acknowledges that intergenerational care and connections are essential to everybody's well-being and fostering functional economies and societies, yet they are too often overlooked or ignored by governments and policymakers. Through this theme, the social work profession recognises the need for societies to strengthen and more actively support respectful intergenerational solidarity for the enduring wellbeing of all.

This 2025 theme builds upon the previous recent World Social Work Day themes of Ubuntu and Buen Vivir by recognising the crucial interdependence of peoples and expands on these bodies of knowledge by focusing on intergenerational caregiving. The theme highlights that care is everyone's responsibility and not just the domain of “women's work” as some societies promote.

Intergenerational solidarity also speaks to the economic and environmental challenges we face, as each generation needs to act in relationship with the environments in which we live so that future generations can inherit healthy and sustainable economic and ecological environments. The theme recognises the importance of the transfer of knowledge across the generations and the value in acknowledging our elders and ancestors and the gifts of wisdom they have provided. It further acknowledges the role of younger generations in interpreting these wisdoms in new ways, to fit the challenges of today and to find new solutions for the future.

Care between peoples is at the heart of this theme and as social workers we recognise our role in shining light on and supporting the diverse range of care arrangements.

In preparing the 2025 poster, the designer commented:

*“The central figure represents the caregiver in all of us, helping all kinds of people across the waterfall. The figure is our mother/father/brother/sister/aunt/uncle/child/or chosen family. It has no gender or features because it represents everyone. Whether it's through support, a helping hand, finding an alternate path, or just being there. Compassion is the catalyst to helping families, friends, and neighbours. It's also showing that the caregiver is being re-energized and fortified through helping. The colours are bright and bold to show their resilience. The people come from all walks of life all around the globe and the landscape isn't meant to be any one place, but rather a symbol of the journey we all travel.”*

To download or translate the poster into your language, visit:

<https://www.ifsw.org/social-work-action/world-social-work-day/world-social-work-day-2025/>

*(source: International Federation of Social Workers: The 2025 World Social Work Day Theme Announced. [online]. [cit. 2025-1-20]. Available at: <[https://www.ifsw.org/the-2025-world-social-work-day-theme-announced/?utm\\_source=News+signup&utm\\_campaign=c44fdf72ee-RSS\\_EMAIL\\_NEWS&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_f1659bc18d-c44fdf72ee-81745058](https://www.ifsw.org/the-2025-world-social-work-day-theme-announced/?utm_source=News+signup&utm_campaign=c44fdf72ee-RSS_EMAIL_NEWS&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f1659bc18d-c44fdf72ee-81745058)>)*

## Useful Links

Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council:

<https://volunteerism-cc.org.cy/en/>

Eurochild:

<https://eurochild.org/>

AGE Platform Europe – Join the Effort to Combat Ageism and Age Discrimination in the EU – a survey:

<https://www.age-platform.eu/join-the-effort-to-combat-ageism-and-age-discrimination-in-the-eu/>

UNECE:

<https://unece.org/population>

## Colophon

ICSW Europe registered office is located at the municipality of Utrecht (the Netherlands).

The name of the Association is: International Council on Social Welfare Europe, abbreviated to: ICSW Europe.

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