

BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE “HEADWAY 2023 – MENTAL HEALTH INDEX”

“Headway 2023” follows the work started with “Headway 2020”, an **initiative on Mental Health** conceived and launched in 2017 by the Think Tank **The European House - Ambrosetti in partnership with Angelini Pharma** with the aim of creating a multidisciplinary platform for strategic reflection, analysis and dialogue between various European experiences in the management of individuals affected by mental disorders

The topic of Mental Health is of crucial importance, knowing that the boundaries of Mental Health go **beyond age, gender, social status and provenance** and that mental disorders have an important impact not only on individuals and their families, but on society as a whole. In fact, as other aspects of health, Mental Health can be influenced by **environmental, socio-economic and biological factors**: rapid social change, stressful work conditions, gender discrimination, social exclusion, unhealthy lifestyle, risks of violence, physical ill-health and human rights violations, in addition to persistent socio-economic pressures make **people vulnerable to mental disorders**. These aspects must therefore be considered when planning for the integrated **strategies of promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of Mental illness**.

This is only possible through delivering support in **community-based settings and across all sectors** including healthcare, workplaces, schools, and society in general. In fact, the COVID-19 pandemic only further emphasized how health in general, and mental health in particular, **significantly impacts on all economic and social sectors of society** and how it is of **crucial importance to continue placing the concept of “health in all policies”** at the top of the political agenda across all Countries, regardless the extent of the emergency.

During 2021, the “Headway 2023” initiative has witnessed the legacies of the COVID-19 pandemic, that has had **significant consequences on the mental health of the whole population** (an e-survey by Eurofound showed that mental wellbeing has reached its lowest level across all age groups since the onset of the pandemic). Nevertheless, the context of Mental Health in Europe was already worrying long before the pandemic: it is estimated that **84 million people (1 out of 6 people)** suffer from mental health conditions and that **165.000 annual deaths are yearly due to mental illness or suicide**, thus positioning Mental Health conditions at the **5th place** among the **most common** and at the **2nd place** among the most disabling **non-communicable diseases**, representing **15% of the European’s burden of disability** (in terms of years lived in disability – YLD).

The urgency to further improve mental well-being is supported by recent OECD studies that estimate the **total cost of Mental Health disorders** (in terms of loss of productivity and health and social care expenditure) to **exceed 600 billion euros** across Europe (equal to 4% of the European GDP). Although the direct and indirect socio-economic impacts of Mental Health are critically important, only **up to 5%** of the **total government health expenditure is allocated to Mental Health** across European Countries, with values ranging from 3% in Poland, 3.5% in Italy, 4.2% in Spain and 5.4% in Denmark.

Despite the advances achieved in some Member States, other are still lagging behind, as emphasized through the analysis realized in the “**Headway 2023 – Mental Health Index**”, a holistic and multidimensional picture considering a multiplicity of elements and interventions across health, welfare and education policies in European Countries. The analyses show a **wide variability in the responses of European Countries to economic, health and social needs related to mental health**.

The “Headway 2023 - Mental Health Index” is designed to provide a **multidimensional picture on mental health across European Countries**

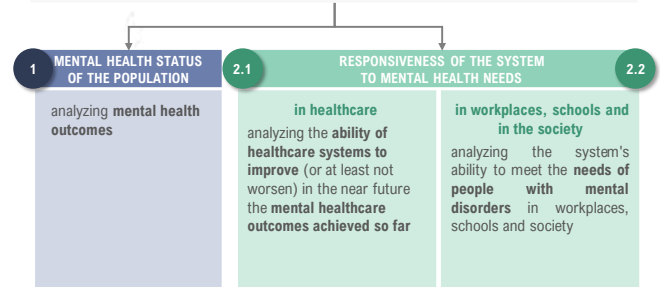


Figure 1. “Headway 2023 – Mental Health Index” structure – Source: *The European House – Ambrosetti, 2021*

For example, in workplaces, the **employment rate of people suffering from depression** is very heterogeneous, with rates ranging from **27%** in Romania to **68%** in Germany, however episodes of **absenteeism are frequent and the cost of losing productivity is high** (equal to **1.6%** of European GDP). Moreover, both wage and gender gaps exist: at European level, people with mental disorders receive a salary that is **58%** lower than the average, for example, in Spain, women with disabilities (mental disorders, among others) earn **14% lower wages than men on equal terms**.

Significant **differences can also be found in schools**: in Portugal, for example, **72%** of **young school dropouts** report to also have a mental disorder, while in Denmark, where **programs to prevent and promote good mental health** in schools are more established, the same rate drops to **8.3%**. Finally, when it comes to the ability to respond to the mental healthcare needs of society, Countries with higher per capita expenditure for mental health-related disability report greater **perceived social support**. For example, in Greece the per capita expenditure is equal to **65 euros** and the percentage of the population that perceives poor social support is equal to **25.9%**, whereas in Austria, the per capita expenditure is about **250 euros** and the percentage of people perceiving poor social support drops to **9%**. In general, from the available data, the results achieved by Northern/Central European Countries are **higher than Eastern Countries**, however, a widespread scarcity of updated data and possible distortions linked to **“misreporting” and “under-reporting”** by some Countries exists.

To conclude, the “**Headway 2023 – Mental Health Index**” can be a useful tool for the **monitoring and planning for healthcare, welfare and education policies** in Mental Health across European Countries, in order to improve critical areas and leverage on good practices.

Today, not seizing the moment would **become a lost opportunity for decision makers** creating a threat to social cohesion, sustainability, and economic growth of the Country-wide System.

