

# WHY THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS MATTER TO THE MHE MEMBERSHIP

**A quick guide to the European elections and their relevance to the mental health field.**

'Why the European Parliament elections matter to the MHE membership' is a quick and easy guide to the European elections process. It gives an overview of the European Parliament and its election and explores why they matter to mental health. It explains how voting can make a difference, and how to approach (candidate) Members of the European Parliament with regards to mental health. This will hopefully encourage our members and stakeholders to get involved in the EU Parliament elections.

## HOW DOES THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT WORK? WHAT DOES IT ACTUALLY DO?

The European Parliament is the only directly elected legislative body of the European Union. It is a large institution representing the EU's 500 million citizens across the current 28 Member States. Members of the European Parliament are elected for 5 years and sit in political groups, organised by political affiliation. There are currently 8 political groups in the European Parliament:



### to the left...

- Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D)
- Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGLZ)
- Group of the Greens / European Free Alliance

### to the centre and right...

- Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)
- Group of the European People's Party (EPP)
- European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR)
- Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group (EFDD)
- Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF)

**There is also a group of Non-Attached Members (NA) composed of Members of the European Parliament who do not sit in one of the recognised political groups.**

After the elections, MEPs are divided into 20 specialised standing committees working thematically (Employment and social affairs, Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs etc.). Committees play a crucial role in policy-making as they are responsible for preparing the Parliament's positions on the various legislative proposals prepared by the European Commission.

## The European Parliament has three key roles:



### LAWS

#### 1. LAWS

The European Parliament decides jointly with the Council of the EU on laws that affect the daily lives of all European Union's citizens.



### CONTROL

#### 2. CONTROL

The European Parliament monitors the correct use of EU funds and examines the functioning of the European institutions by ensuring that all rules and procedures are carefully implemented. After the European elections, the Parliament elects its President and approves the appointment of the Commission (President and College of Commissioners).



### BUDGET

#### 3. BUDGET

The European Parliament, together with the Council, approves and scrutinises the EU annual budgets and also adopts the EU's long-term budget known as the 'multiannual financial framework' every 7 years. Budgetary power is important: like any other Parliament, whoever allocates the funds has the power to set political priorities.

## HOW CAN WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE AND PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH IN ALL POLICIES BY GETTING INVOLVED IN THE ELECTIONS?

At [Mental Health Europe](#), we recognise that mental distress can be experienced by anyone and may be caused by a series of different factors and life events. For this reason, many policies, including those that might not seem directly linked to mental health, can still have an impact on people's mental wellbeing and rights. The upcoming European elections are an ideal opportunity to ensure that mental health is included in all policies at European level, such as those on employment, social affairs, migration, and fundamental rights.

Between 23 and 26 May 2019, Europeans will get to the polls to elect their representatives in the European Parliament for the next 5 years. The number of MEPs vary from one country to the other. Seats are allocated to each Member State based on population for a minimum of 6 seats and a maximum of 96 seats. As from 2019, the total number of MEPs will be 705.

Voting for candidates that support positive mental health is vital. The elected MEPs engage in public debates and play a crucial role in shaping the policy of the EU: candidates and future MEPs need to be reminded that mental health should be high on the EU agenda. It is crucial for MHE and its membership to ensure that the policies developed by the EU Commission and voted by the Parliament integrate mental health and wellbeing.

Even where mental health is not explicitly mentioned, all policies should integrate elements that have a positive impact on the mental health of citizens.

It is now the ideal time to find out who will be the candidates in your own country/region and let them know what they can do to support positive mental health in Europe if elected. Help your MEPs understand that mental health matters for millions of European citizens, that it is much more than a “hot issue”. Encourage them to champion mental health and become active supporters of a cause that matters.

## **GET INVOLVED: It's easier than you think**

- Download [our letter template](#) and share MHE's 2019 Elections Manifesto with candidate MEPs of your own country. Ideally, and depending on your resources, you could translate the letter and/or the manifesto into your own language.
- Invite candidate MEPs to join the MHE Coalition for Mental Health and Well-Being in the EU Parliament if elected.
- Be noisy on social media: share the manifesto among your networks, the more visibility the better.
- Invite candidate MEPs to your events or organise open meetings. These events could aim to raise the candidate's awareness on mental health and the work of your organisations, as well as gain their support to the manifesto.
- Keep regular contact and monitor the work of candidate MEPs (e.g. via their social media pages or websites).
- Take action through your network and MHE (collaborate with other organisations for joint actions or events, organise a social media campaign, etc).
- Monitor the work of the European Parliament thanks to the [On Our Watch initiative](#) which looks at what the Parliament has been doing in specific areas since the last elections, including mental health.
- Want to know more? Have a look at our guide [Keep in Mind: A quick guide to European Institutions and EU policy-making](#) relevant to mental health and people with mental health problems.



**Europe's future is at stake, let's make it mental health friendly!**



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