

RC71 Speech – Claudia

Thank you very much for this invitation, it is an honour to be part of this panel. Mental Health Europe really welcomes the Mental Health Coalition, one of WHO Europe's key flagship initiatives.

For those who do not know us, Mental Health Europe is the largest independent European non-governmental network committed to the protection of the rights of persons with mental health problems and psychosocial disabilities, the promotion of **positive** mental health, the prevention of mental **distress**, and the improvement of care and social **inclusion**. We act as knowledge brokers and as a hub for learning exchange and concerted **action** to improve policies and practices.

Our members are associations, organisations and individuals active in the field of mental health and well-being in Europe, including persons with psychosocial disabilities, their families and supporters, human rights experts, mental health professionals and service providers. For over **35** years we have been working closely with international bodies and the European Union institutions to mainstream mental health in all policies and end mental health stigma. All together we strive to ensure that everyone can enjoy the **highest** attainable standard of mental health and that persons with mental health problems can live fulfilling lives.

There are many ways in which Mental Health Europe can contribute to the delivery of WHO/Europe strategic objectives for mental health via the Pan European Mental Health Coalition. One of the strengths of Mental Health Europe is that we have been bringing together **from the start** many key actors in the mental health field. Thanks to their varied expertise, we are **uniquely** well placed to feed into, and **enrich**, the work of the Mental Health Coalition and apply this at national and local level, including through engaging with policy-makers, authorities and other actors. Our members are also key in raising awareness and ensuring more stakeholders are informed about, and **engage with**, the work of this flagship initiative.

Mental Health Europe is specialising in **co-creation**, which fosters equality-based partnerships between experts by experience, their supporters, service providers, policy makers and other actors. We have expertise in bringing different stakeholders together, also **beyond** the usual interlocutors, to find **solutions** to the most pressing issues in the field of mental health.

We also work very closely with the EU institutions. We coordinate the European Parliament Coalition for Mental Health and Wellbeing and the European Commission "COVID-19: Mental Health Support" network. Knowledge exchange and **collaboration** with these different initiatives can help promote mental health as a critical priority for public health across the European Region.

This flagship initiative will be **crucial** to mainstream, promote and safeguard mental well-being as an integral element of the COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery; to counter the stigma and discrimination associated with mental health problems, and to promote investment in accessible quality mental health services. The work of the Coalition will add to the efforts of different stakeholders through the European Region and help closing persisting **gaps** in mental health so that **no-one** is left behind. We sincerely hope that the Regional Committee will endorse this WHO Europe flagship initiative and its Framework for Action, and truly look **forward** to being an active partner within it.