



No Future of Work without Mental Health

Brussels, 28th April 2019

On World Day for Safety and Health at Work, the European Alliance for Mental Health - Employment and Work ([EUMH Alliance](#)) highlights the importance of including mental health as part of a timely debate on the Future of Work in the EU. In a world where costs related to occupational mental health challenges are substantialⁱ and constantly increasingⁱⁱ, discussions around the Future of Work will need to address potential negative effects of new forms of employment on mental health. In this context, the [EU Framework Directive on occupational safety and health \(OSH\)](#) should better ensure workers' safety and health in every aspect related to changing realities of work, including mental wellbeing.

Changes in societies such as digital technology, demographic shifts, and changes in the way work is organised can encourage the promotion of positive mental health and wellbeing. For example, flexibility and higher degrees of time control at work associated with non-traditional working arrangements (home working, short-term) may allow better work-life balance and decrease stress associated with commuting. However, they may also pose major threats to workers' mental health and well-being. Our latest [podcast](#) demonstrates the impact of the gig and platform economy (freelancers, independent contractors, e.g. Uber or take-away food sites, digital developers) on young people's mental health.

Such models of work often entail poor financial security and unstable job continuity. Furthermore, gig economy jobs are often characterised by a lack of social contact and poor management practices. More effort needs to be done to ensure better quality working conditions, including a more predictable income flow, to ensure these employment models do not bring about a worse situation for the workforce as regards occupational mental health and wellbeing.

"It is essential for all companies and employers to take action to address stress and prevent burnout at work to ensure a bright future of work for all", stated Laura Jones, Secretary General of EPR. "Such actions benefit all the workforce, not just those with mental health issues" she added. "Policy makers must also consider how to address the mental health challenges that workers in the gig and platform economies may experience".

There is an urgent need for current OSH strategies to be reviewed to adapt to these developments and pro-actively protect and preserve the mental health of millions of workers. In an unregulated

labour market which Future of Work scenarios may suggest, workers in precarious and low-paid jobs, particularly those with low levels of skills and autonomy, could easily end up being left behind in terms of health and wellbeing. Importantly, fair remuneration and addressing rapidly increasing in-work poverty rates will need to be in the center of debates on the future world of work.

“Good mental health and wellbeing at work is fundamental to ensure quality of life for every worker - and their family - as well as positive economic outcomes for society as a whole. It is also imperative to look at the Future of Work in the EU agenda through a health equity lens. Occupational mental health promotion and prevention are an important and a smart way to invest our resources, and major EU-driven processes, such as the European Semester and the next EU funding programmes should acknowledge this”, says Caroline Costongs, EuroHealthNet’s Director.

The EUMH Alliance urges the EU and Member States to ensure better implementation and enforcement of the OSH Framework Directive, while further addressing mental health and psychosocial risks in their OSH strategies. The Alliance will continue to actively facilitate constructive dialogue between its members and beyond to ensure safe, secure, and predictable working environments for all workers. Addressing in-work poverty and work-life balance are a must, not an option. The decisions taken today shape the labour realities of tomorrow and, subsequently, the potential benefits for the health and wellbeing of European citizens.

//ENDS

The European Alliance for Mental Health – Employment & Work ([EUMH Alliance](#)) is an informal coalition of European organisations, the main aims of which are to promote mental health and well-being in the workplace, to advocate for equal access to the labour market for all people experiencing mental ill health and to stimulate policy developments at EU level in these domains. Our membership consists of:

European Association of Paritarian Institutions (AEIP)

International Association of Mutual Benefit Societies (AIM)

GGZ Nederland (Dutch Association of Mental Health and Addiction Care)

Mental Health Europe (MHE)

EuroHealthNet

European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR)

Eurocadres

European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)

ⁱ EU/OECD (2018). Health at a Glance: Europe 2018. State of health in the EU cycle. https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/state/docs/2018_healthatglance_rep_en.pdf (accessed on 23 April 2019)

ⁱⁱ EU-OSHA (2017). Estimating the cost of work-related accidents and ill-health: An analysis of European data sources. <https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/estimating-cost-work-related-accidents-and-ill-health-analysis/view> (accessed on 23 April 2019)