

Towards a personalized mental health care in Europe: the new Action Plan of the European Psychiatric Association

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Summary

The European Psychiatric Association (EPA) is the largest European association in the field of mental health, and it includes more than 80,000 individual members, who actively participate in the various activities of the Association. EPA board members are responsible for guiding the association in the scope of its lobbying and educational missions by providing ethical governance, setting out strategic objectives, and ensuring the judicious management of financial resources. In order to achieve these aims, the EPA has produced several policy and guidance papers dealing with "hot topics" in psychiatry and mental health.

The 2025-2027 Action Plan of the European Psychiatric Association will include six thematic areas, dealing with: 1) improve knowledge on the genetic, biological and social determinants of mental health; 2) refine and tailor diagnostic and treatment approaches; 3) advance research on brain and mental health across the lifespan; 4) reduce multimorbidity and premature death of patients with severe mental disorders; 5) increase awareness on public mental health; 6) provide more attention on the mental health needs of minorities. Although ambitious, the final aim of this action plan is to propose a modern image of psychiatry, balancing traditional and innovative knowledge, and to improve the ordinary clinical practice.

The European Psychiatric Association (EPA) is the largest European association in the field of mental health, representing more than 80,000 mental health professionals working in the 44 national psychiatric associations which are full EPA members (<https://www.europsy.net>). The Association includes a large number of individual members, who actively participate in the various activities of the Association, including several Scientific Sections, Committees and Task Forces ¹.

The EPA Board is elected every two years and includes 19 prominent European psychiatrists elected by the members of the association. Since 2018, the EPA Board includes representatives of GAMIAN and EUFAMI as *ex-officio* members, in order to deal with issues and concerns raised by users and carers.

Board members are responsible for guiding the association in the scope of its outreach, lobbying and educational missions by providing sound and ethical governance, setting out strategic objectives, and ensuring the judicious management of financial resources.

The EPA Executive Committee is composed by the President, Past President, President Elect, Secretary General, Treasurer, Chair of the Council of National Psychiatric Associations (NPAs), Secretaries for Sections and for Education. The Executive Committee is responsible for overseeing the operational functioning of the association, as well as preparing and ensuring the smooth implementation of EPA Board decisions.

The EPA has established memorandum of understanding and collaboration with

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the most relevant international scientific associations dealing with mental health, brain health and public health, such as the European Brain Council (EBC), the European College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ECNP), the European Union of Medical Specialists (UEMS) and the World Psychiatric Association (WPA), just to cite some of them ^{2,3}

The EPA has produced several policy and guidance papers ⁴ dealing with “hot topics” in psychiatry and mental health, such as digitalization of mental health care ⁵, impact of climate change on mental health ⁶, quality of mental health care in Europe ⁷ and future of diagnosis in mental health ⁸. EPA documents are freely available at <https://www.eurpsy.net/guidance-papers/>.

The Action Plan of the European Psychiatric Association for the years 2025-2027 will address the major changes occurred in mental health research and practice following recent advances in science and structural modifications in the society ⁹. Some of these changes have been highlighted by the recent COVID-19 pandemic ¹⁰, which has represented an “open-air trial”, bringing together at the same time biological (e.g., the brain tropism of the virus) and psychosocial (e.g., loneliness, fear for the future, mourning) severe mental health stressors ¹¹. These changes have made necessary a rethinking of mental health care in order to improve our diagnostic and therapeutic skills ¹². The 2025-2027 Action Plan will include six thematic areas, dealing with: 1) improve knowledge on the genetic, biological and social determinants of mental health; 2) refine and tailor diagnostic and treatment approaches; 3) advance research on brain and mental health across the lifespan; 4) reduce multimorbidity and premature death of patients with severe mental disorders; 5) increase awareness on public mental health; 6) provide more attention on the mental health needs of minorities. In order to address the above-mentioned challenges, the European Psychiatric Association is going to implement key strategic actions at political, institutional, scientific, clinical

and educational levels. Those activities will include the identification of gaps in the current literature on each of the six areas, the development of educational materials and tools for healthcare professionals and the lay population, as well as research programmes to be conducted at the European level. One aim of this ambitious action plan is to overcome the separation between the “mind and the body”, by integrating knowledge and research with professionals coming from proximal fields, such as internal medicine, neurology and psychology. Finally, as for other medical disciplines, a focus will be on prevention of mental disorders and promotion of mental health, through the implementation of preventive and disease awareness campaigns, particularly for those at risk of developing mental health problems.

Although ambitious, the final aim of this action plan is to propose a modern image of psychiatry, balancing traditional and innovative knowledge, and to improve the ordinary clinical practice. All European psychiatrists, mental health professionals, users and carers should be committed to change mental health practice by developing concrete actions to address the psychiatric and psychological needs of the population.

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Conflict of interest statement

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Author's contribution

Prof. Andrea Fiorillo is the only contributor of the present paper.

Ethical consideration

None.

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