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CALL TO THE MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Towards a more effective management of mental health and addictions

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On 7 June 2023, the European Commission adopted its Communication on a Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health. This long-awaited initiative outlines the ways in which the EU can contribute to supporting the mental health of European citizens. The Communication notes that people's health and well-being are determined by their life experiences, and environments in which they spend their time, and that health determinants such as the consumption of licit drugs, including alcohol or tobacco, have an important impact on mental health. Whereas the recognition by the European Commission of the link between addiction and mental health is important, more action and concrete policies are needed at the EU level to ensure effective management of mental health and substance use disorders.

There is a robust scientific agreement regarding the link and intricate connection between addiction and mental health. This interconnection reveals that individuals grappling with mental health challenges are significantly more susceptible to developing substance use disorders,

while also highlighting the potential for improved mental well-being through appropriate addiction management. The implications of this connection underscore the necessity of a truly comprehensive approach to addressing mental health. Effective and holistic strategies aimed at enhancing mental health must inevitably incorporate measures that address addiction.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and its dire effects on Europeans, health has become critical area of action of the European Parliament in the current legislature. Members of the Subcommittee on Public Health (EP SANT) are currently working on an Own-Initiative Report (INI) on Mental Health and it is paramount that such a document be carried to fruition in the most comprehensive and evidence-based manner. On the other hand, the current discussions in EP SANT on a report on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) show promising inspiration from Europe's Beating Cancer Plan. The BECA report, published in 2022, put forward a realistic and evidence-based approach towards licit substance use, such as alcohol abuse and tobac-

co addiction, and should constitute the basis for the consideration of such disorders in the final version of the NCD report.

However, the prolonged consequences on the health of the population call for long-term policies that should be politically supported and followed by concrete actions for the upcoming legislative term.

We therefore call upon the Members of the European Parliament to:

- ***Ensure that health remains a key priority throughout the 2024-2029 term***

The upcoming elections of the European Parliament in 2024 represent a true opportunity for future representatives of the Europeans to ensure that Mental health remains a key political priority during the next legislative term.

- ***Mainstream mental health considerations into all health policies***

Drawing upon the European Mental Health Capacity Building Initiative advocated for in the Commission's Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health, we urge to integrate mental health across all policies. In particular, aspects relating to the mental well-being of patients should be taken into account in all health policies.

- ***Recognize the interplay between Mental Health and addiction***

The EU Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health acknowledges that health determinants such as "harmful consumption of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs" have an important impact on mental health. While experts in their field recognize that poor mental health is both a cause and a consequence of substance abuse and other addictions, more efforts on the political side can be made. Such an evidence-based position based on reduction of harm relates to the objective of the Approach to break through stigma and discrimination against people suffering from addictions.