



## **EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT INTENSIVE CARE INTEREST GROUP**

### **Joint Declaration**

The European Parliament Intensive Care Interest Group (EPIC-IG) welcomes the Comprehensive approach to mental health that was published by the European Commission on 7 June. The EPIC-IG is a collaboration between the European Society of Intensive Care Medicine (ESICM) and Members of the European Parliament.

Mental health is a crucial issue for all EU citizens, as they expressed during the Conference on the Future of Europe. According to the WHO World Mental Health Report 2022<sup>1</sup>, the COVID-19 pandemic, the subsequent economic crisis, the war in Ukraine and many other factors have caused the silent pandemic of mental health afflictions to spread exponentially.

It is however paramount to emphasize the importance of the ones having to deal with this silent pandemic both as patients and as caretakers: the healthcare professionals (HCPs). The WHO estimates that there will be a shortage of more than 10 million healthcare professionals (HCPs) worldwide by 2030, raising a major public health concern and a threat to quality care delivery<sup>2</sup>. The number of HCPs in Europe is already insufficient to provide adequate care for all EU patients and the situation is becoming more acute with every passing day.

Healthcare professionals in general, and intensivists in particular, are among the most affected professions by psychosocial hazards, which not only decreases the attractiveness of their profession and causes retention issues in the health systems across Europe, but also has a direct impact on their private and professional life and thus consequences on their patients, relatives and families. Only healthcare professionals in good mental health can duly take care of patients and their families.

Intensive care healthcare professionals have suffered significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic and are now, once again, at the front line in this silent pandemic when it comes to burnout syndrome and other mental illnesses.

For these reasons, we call on the European Commission and Member States to address the mental health of healthcare professionals in all their European, national and local strategies on the topic.

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<sup>1</sup> World mental health report: transforming mental health for all. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2022. Licence: [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO](#) (p.42).

<sup>2</sup> [Health workforce](#). Geneva: World Health Organization; 2022.

We also ask to:

- Adopt a **“mental health in all policies” strategy**, while including a **specific chapter** on mental health of HCPs in each of these policies.
- Strengthen the cooperation between the European Institutions, Member States and healthcare professionals to **establish a harmonized approach** to the issue of mental health of healthcare professionals and hospital management and in particular, intensivists.
- Within this comprehensive approach, **create guidelines** on how to tackle mental health issues of healthcare professionals, specifically intensivists, adapt their working environment and create methods to retain workforce and make the profession attractive again.
- Develop within these guidelines a specific name and definition of ***Burnout Syndrome*** that would apply concretely to healthcare professionals in ICUs and their particular working environment.
- Integrate in the guidelines the **3R method** to fight burnout in hospitals (*Recognise, Reverse, and build Resilience*) and promote it as the harmonised approach in all Member States to mitigate burnout syndrome in European hospitals and ICUs.
- Increase European **funding programmes** with a particular focus on combating the deteriorating mental health of healthcare professionals.
- Organise a **European Year of Mental health** with concrete actions focusing on the Mental Health of Healthcare Professionals.

Given the fundamental importance of the fight against this silent pandemic, we at EPIC-IG consider ourselves to be in the vanguard of this battle. We reaffirm our commitment to tackling this issue and look forward to continuing to do so in the years ahead.

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The copy of the Joint declaration will also be addressed to:

Mr. Margaritis Schinás, Vice President of the European Commission for Promoting our European Way of Life

Ms. Stella Kyriakides, European Commissioner for Health and Food safety

Mr. José Miñones, Minister of Health of the Kingdom of Spain

26 Ministers of Health of the European Union