

# MENTAL HEALTH AND MENTAL ILLNESSES



## Based on youth focus groups results in Europe

Young people from six countries, Lithuania, Poland, Bulgaria, Spain, Greece and Cyprus, were asked about mental health and mental illnesses.

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## THE CONCEPT OF MENTAL HEALTH

Young people understand mental health in a complex way - as a healthy relationship with themselves and others. This requires both active physical activity and personal attitudes. BG and ES noted that in some cases young people find it difficult to define what they consider to be mental health, although it is much easier to define what is mentally unhealthy.

## MENTAL HEALTH ILLNESSES AND FACTORS



In all countries, young people know about mental disorders and diseases, although the level of knowledge varies, but everyone is united by a general positive attitude towards this problem, openness to its solution. In BG and LT, it is observed that concepts are often confused, resulting in not knowing the difference between psychiatry and psychology, and between short-term sadness or bad habits and long-term mental health problems. In the case of CY, it is proposed to abandon the term "mental disorder" as an inappropriate approach to the problem. It is widely agreed that mental illness is influenced by personal attitudes as well as by social connections, social networks, bereavement and bad habits.



## PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND ATTITUDES

In all countries, young people have personal experience of illness or have relatives who suffer from mental disorders. At the same time, the tendency is confirmed that when faced with mental difficulties, support and help is first sought in the circle of friends and relatives, only in rare cases seeking professional help. The most common mentions are the lack of knowledge and difficult access to psychologists' help, sometimes the stigmatization of mental problems.

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## THE STIGMA OF MENTAL DISORDERS

Stigmatization of mental disorders is one of the most sensitive issues. The hostile attitude towards mental illness in society or among relatives encourages one to avoid speaking out loud about the difficulties experienced and to seek professional help, this was especially observed in BG and EU. On the other hand, the term "stigma" is not entirely clear. For example, in the case of LT, this term is not appropriate to understand the real situation. However, a clear trend is that young people are much more open and sensitive to mental health than previous generations.

B

## COVID-19 IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH



Unlike BG and LT, in other countries the negative impact on mental health is particularly pronounced. The most frequently mentioned factors are broken social ties, anxiety about health and the future, pain and sadness caused by losses.



## PERSONAL MENTAL WELNESS

Young people understand the importance of mental health in all countries. Coping mechanisms to deal with challenges are quite similar everywhere - social connections are maintained, active physical activity, spiritual development. For some it is important to feel good when you are alone, others support their good feeling by being with other people. It is believed that positive changes in the treatment and acceptance of mental disorders in society can be determined by the education system, the message spread by the media and personal experiences.

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