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Brussels, 12/01/2024

Dear Commissioner Kyriakides,

I am writing to you in my capacity as President of the European Council of the Liberal Professions (CEPLIS), the only organization bringing together the legal, healthcare, and technical professions at the Community level. Our Council is the voice of national interprofessional and European monoprofessional representative bodies of our socioeconomic category.

In January 2023, the European Commission launched the initiative “A Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health”, putting mental health on par with physical health. It is estimated that approximately 46% of EU citizens had an emotional or psychosocial problem in the last 12 months, and that 25% reported encountering issues accessing adequate services.

These figures highlight the necessity to further promote the importance of mental health through European policies and a new framework. In concrete terms, this calls for measures to be implemented proactively in order to reinforce national healthcare systems’ capacities, economically as well as socially.

Indeed, the actual European funding is too low (€1.23 billion), with an excessive share of it (90%) being dedicated to mental hospitals, thus leaving at the side professionals working in community-based mental healthcare, despite WHO’s call for more investment in the latter. The budget should then be raised sufficiently in the first instance, and better distributed among the different initiatives in the second instance, and Member States should be encouraged to increase their own budgets. In keeping with the pillars of the Commission’s Comprehensive Approach, an emphasis should be placed on prevention, access and reintegration.

Moreover, due to its intrinsic link with liberal professions, the field of healthcare would gain from a rigorous implementation of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in Universities and other formation centers across Member States. Professionals, including the youngest, could keep their knowledge and skills up to date with the newest scientific findings, allowing them to treat their patients more efficiently. Coupled with a special interest for young professionals, CPD implementation would show that the EU considers healthcare as an investment, and not a simple cost. Aside from this, a special interest for the youth could take the form of support for students, interns and recent graduates transitioning to the professional world, and for young citizens worried by the impact of major regional and global issues.

Finally, equality of access must be a pillar of a new European healthcare framework. Of course, it suggests that patients should be able to seek treatment from a mental healthcare service. But, following the European 2030 Digital Compass objectives, it also involves that both patients and professionals must be equipped with proper digital skills and have access to telecommunication infrastructures, when they seek online treatment and when the latter needs online CPD.

We feel that the EU must give high priority to these concrete measures regarding European mental health. Our membership looks forward to the outcomes of your work and remains eager to support the Commission's efforts with evidence and by putting proper knowledge and experience at its disposal.

Thanking you for your attention to this letter,

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gaetano Stella". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gaetano Stella,

President of CEPLIS