WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EUROPE

WELTGESUNDHEITSORGANISATION
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ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE LA SANTÉ
BUREAU RÉGIONAL DE L'EUROPE

ВСЕМИРНАЯ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ ЗДРАВООХРАНЕНИЯ
ЕВРОПЕЙСКОЕ РЕГИОНАЛЬНОЕ БЮРО

Scaling up mental health services within the primary health care approach
Mini-conference
Provisional programme

February 25, 2026, 12:00-16:00 CET	
12:00-13:20 CET (80 mins)	**Moderators:** Melitta Jakab, Head of Office, WHO European Centre for Primary Health Care, & Ledia Lazeri, Regional Adviser, Mental Health and Well-Being Unit, WHO Regional Office for Europe **Welcoming remarks:** • **Natasha Azzopardi Muscat, Director, Division of Country Health Policies and Systems (CPS), WHO Regional Office for Europe (10 Min)** • **Viviana Martinez Bianchi, MD, FAAFP, WONCA President (7min)** **Keynote presentation. Moving mental health services closer to the people: The role of primary care in addressing mental health across the life course (30 mins)** This keynote presentation has two objectives:

The first objective is to explore how early experiences, social determinants, and key transitions influence health and well-being over time within the life course. It will highlight the significance of social context and a cross-sectoral approach—including culture, socioeconomic status, and policy environments—in shaping health trajectories. It will also address contemporary societal challenges that affect mental health across various life stages.

Speaker: Christos Leonis, MD, PhD, FRCGP (Hon), FESCF, WONCA, Prof. Emeritus in General Practice and Primary Health Care, School of Medicine, University of Crete, Greece (15 min)

The second objective is to underscore that primary care is one of the most effective entry points within the broader ecosystem of mental health service delivery. It serves as the first point of contact for individuals at all stages of life—children, young mothers, adults, and older adults—and is uniquely positioned to detect, prevent, and manage mental health conditions early. It will introduce the four strategies for scaling up mental health services in PHC as practical ways to integrate mental health care into primary care.

Speakers: Zulfiya Pirova, Technical Officer, WHO European Centre for Primary Health Care and Ana Maria Tijerino, Technical Officer, Mental Health and Well-Being Unit, WHO Regional Office for Europe (15 min)

Panel discussion: Bringing mental health care closer to the people – why and how (45 min)

- **Ronny Bruffaerts, Director, WHO Collaborating Centre for Public Health Psychiatry, Professor of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, KU Leuven, Belgium**
- **Katherine Rouleau, Global PHC Lead, Office of Health System Partnerships; Department of Family and Community Medicine, University of Toronto, Canada**
- **Peter Keri, President, Global Alliance of Mental Illness Advocacy Networks Europe (GAMIAN-Europe)**
- **Member of The Youth Advisory Group (TBC)**

	Q&A (5min)
13:20-13:35 CET (15 min)	**Break**
13:35 -16:00 (145 mins)	**Technical deep-dive 1. Transforming the PHC model of care to better address mental health needs** **Moderators and keynote presenters: Dr Anna Sagan, Technical Officer, WHO European Centre for Primary Health Care, & Professor Emeritus Jan De Maeseneer, Head WHO Collaborating Centre for Family Medicine and Primary Health Care-Ghent University, Belgium** **Part I: Identifying needs and reaching hidden populations** This segment will begin by addressing the challenge of identifying mental health needs, acknowledging that many individuals do not seek help or appear in clinical settings. It will emphasize the critical role of proactive community outreach and the use of data-driven population health management (PHM) tools to enhance case-finding. Examples will include leveraging the co-occurrence of mental and somatic conditions—such as depression in people with diabetes or cardiovascular disease—and utilizing integrated socioeconomic and health data as predictive indicators of mental health risk. **This part will feature three country spotlights:** Spain, Lithuania, and Finland **Moderated discussion (25 min)** **Part II: Adapting primary care service provision** The second part will focus on redesigning PHC services to integrate mental health more fully through inclusion of mental health (and social care) professionals within PHC teams or through better

	linkages with specialist mental health care, supporting a shift toward multidisciplinary, team-based approaches. This segment will also emphasize the importance of linkages with other types of care through a stepped care model. Such models ensure that individuals receive the right level of support at the right time. **Keynote presentation (15 mins):** Renowned expert on the session's topic **Speaker (TBC)** **Three country spotlights (3 x 10 mins) by country experts or a country panel:** Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Netherlands, Italy **Moderated discussion (25 min)**
February 26, 2026, 12:00-16:05 CET	
12:00 -13:05 **(65 mins)**	**Technical deep-dive 2: Health workforce education and training as crucial tools and resources for integrating mental health care into primary care** **Moderator(s): Cassie Redlich, Technical Officer, Mental Health and Well-Being Unit, & Tomas Zapata, Unit Head, Health Workforce and Service Delivery, WHO Regional Office for Europe** This session will highlight the key mental health competencies required for primary care workers and explore effective strategies for integrating these competencies into both pre-service and in-service training across diverse contexts. It will also underscore the importance of supervision, mentoring, and ongoing support, and showcase practical tools that facilitate implementation, such as the WHO mhGAP programme and other clinical guidance. **Keynote presentation (15 mins): Title (TBD)** **Speaker: Brandon Gray, Mental Health Officer, WHO HQ** **Two country spotlights (2 x 10 mins) by country experts:** Kazakhstan (TBC),

	Moderated discussion (30 mins)
13.05 -14:15 **(65 min)**	**Technical deep-dive 3: Supporting the scale-up of mental health services through sustainable funding and financing** **Moderators: Daniel Chisolm, Mental Health Specialist, WHO HQ, & Triin Habicht, Senior Health Economist, WHO Barcelona Office for Health Systems Financing, WHO Regional Office for Europe** This session will examine key financing strategies to support the integration and expansion of mental health services, emphasizing the link to deinstitutionalization and shifting funding across levels. Topics will include demonstrating the need for investment in mental health; aligning public benefits packages and entitlements; and creating payment mechanisms that motivate multidisciplinary primary care teams and encourage collaboration between primary care, specialist services, and other sectors such as social care. Country experiences, including insights from Estonia, Ukraine, and Czechia, will be used to illustrate practical methods. **Introduction (10 mins)** **Three country spotlights (3 x 10 mins) by country experts:** Ukraine (TBC), Estonia (TBC), Czechia (TBC) **Moderated discussion (25 mins)**
14:15-14:30 CET **(15 mins)**	**Break**
14:30-15:35 CET **(65 min)**	**Panel discussion: Harnessing digital technologies for mental health: innovations and opportunities** **Moderators: Kim Yu, MD, FAAFP, WONCA Liaison to WHO, & Zulfiya Pirova, Technical Officer, WHO European Centre for Primary Health Care**

	This session will explore digital innovation in AI, highlighting its potential to enhance mental health care through advanced screening, risk prediction, triage, and therapeutic applications. AI's capacity to analyze extensive data enables early detection, personalized treatment, and improved outcomes. Nonetheless, challenges such as data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the complexity of human emotions emphasize the importance of ethical and cautious implementation. As demand for mental health services continues to grow, rethinking AI's role offers promising opportunities to bridge service gaps, expand access, and transform community mental health support in innovative and responsible ways. **Keynote presentation (15 mins): Title (TBD)** **Speaker: Viviana Martinez Bianchi, MD, FAAFP, WONCA President** **Moderated panel discussion (40 min)** • **Ana Luisa Neves, Clinical Senior Lecturer, Digital Health and Director of Global Digital Health Unit, Chair, WONCA Working Party of E-Health and Digital Health (UK)** • **Heleen Ripper, Professor eMental-Health at the Department of Clinical Psychology, VU University Amsterdam, the Netherlands** • **Tim Olde Hartman, GP, Academic Health Care Centre Oosterhout; Head Unit Research of the Department of Primary and Community Care, Radboudumc, the Netherlands** • **Ana Maria Tijerino, Technical Officer, Mental Health and Well-Being Unit, WHO Regional Office for Europe (TBC)** **Q&A (10 min)**
15:35-16:00 CET **(25 mins)**	**Closing part**: • Key lessons from the moderators of all sessions • Final remarks by Melitta Jakab, Head of Office, WHO European Centre for Primary Health Care, & Ledia Lazeri, Regional Adviser, Mental Health and Well-Being Unit, WHO Regional Office for Europe.