

EN
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Answer given by Mr Micallef
on behalf of the European Commission
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There have been several efforts to collect data on loneliness in recent years. In 2022, the Commission conducted the first EU-wide survey on loneliness, with findings available on the Commission's website¹. In 2018 and 2022, the EU survey on income and living conditions included variables on quality of life, such as social contacts and the feeling of being left out. These variables will be included again in the 2028 survey, with results published on the online database of the Statistical Office of the EU (Eurostat)².

Additionally, under the current Horizon Europe framework programme for research and innovation³, the Commission is funding a coordination and support action dedicated to loneliness⁴. This project, set to launch in early 2025, aims to identify, organise, and integrate publicly accessible datasets on loneliness, contributing evidence on loneliness and effective interventions⁵.

Loneliness significantly impacts mental health. The Commission, through its flagship initiatives of the Communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health⁶, supports Member States⁷ in identifying best practices and improving prevention strategies for mental health issues, especially for vulnerable populations. Loneliness will also be an important angle considered in the elaboration of the intergenerational fairness strategy.

Finally, in her political guidelines⁸ for the new Commission mandate, the President of the Commission announced an EU-wide inquiry into how social media affects well-being. Loneliness is a critical factor in this context. To lay the groundwork for a future EU-wide longitudinal study on social media use, loneliness, and well-being, the Commission will conduct a pilot survey to explore social media's role in loneliness among adolescents.

¹ https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/scientific-activities-z/survey-methods-and-analysis-centre-smac/loneliness_en

² Indicators on social contacts and feeling left out are published in the Eurostat Online Database: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main/data/database>

³ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en

⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/horizon-cl2-2024-transformations-01-01>

⁵ The project is entitled 'The loneliness and social isolation in Europe Network: Evidence-based policy recommendation on its causes, consequences and monitoring'.

⁶ https://health.ec.europa.eu/publications/comprehensive-approach-mental-health_en

⁷ <https://mentalhealthandwellbeing.eu/the-joint-action/>

⁸ https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf