

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002851/26
to the Commission
Elena Kountoura (The Left)
(9 July 2026)**

Subject: Mental health of young people in the EU and the need for a coordinated European response

According to recent OECD and Commission data, the rates of adolescents and young people reporting mental health problems in the EU have increased significantly ⁽¹⁾ due to social isolation, reduced physical activity and increased exposure to problematic Internet and social media use and cyberbullying. Cases of anxiety, depression and other mental disorders have worsened and increased and the fact that suicide is ranked as the main cause of death among young people aged between 15 and 29 is particularly concerning ⁽²⁾.

Meanwhile, one in four countries lacks community mental health services for children, highlighting significant gaps in prevention, early diagnosis and cross-border cooperation on addressing mental health disorders ⁽³⁾. According to the OECD, major depression disorders, generalised anxiety disorders and alcohol use disorders will reduce healthy life expectancy in the EU by 2.5 years over the next 25 years, corresponding to around 28 000 premature deaths per year ⁽⁴⁾.

With this in mind, can the Commission answer the following:

1. Does the Commission intend to propose a European strategy on the mental health of young people or, alternatively, a dedicated action plan with clear and measurable objectives for the Member States?
2. Does it plan to adopt a psychosocial approach and include mandatory mental health impact assessments in employment, housing and education policies?
3. What additional steps does it intend to take to strengthen prevention, education and regulation of exposure to the Internet, social media and online bullying?

Submitted: 9.7.2026

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(12 October 2026)**

The Commission is implementing the actions of the communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health ⁽⁵⁾, including the development of a prevention toolkit with Unicef to support policymakers in their work on health of children and young people ⁽⁶⁾.

The Commission also investigated the impact of excessive screentime and use of social media on youth mental health. In June 2026, it published a Eurobarometer ⁽⁷⁾ on the topic that informed the work of the President's Special Panel on child safety online ⁽⁸⁾.

On 17 September 2026, it proposed an EU Kids Act ⁽⁹⁾ to maintain a coherent regulatory framework and enforcement structure to protect minors from online risks and as well as uphold the digital single market.

The Commission is enforcing the provisions of the Digital Services Act ⁽¹⁰⁾ on protection of minors and implementing the Better Internet for Kids strategy ⁽¹¹⁾ through the network of Safer Internet Centres ⁽¹²⁾, and the EU Action Plan against Cyberbullying ⁽¹³⁾.

The Commission Recommendation on integrated child protection systems calls on Member States to implement preventative and early identification mechanisms through anti-bullying plans. The Audiovisual Media Services Directive, which requires video-sharing platforms to protect minors, will be reviewed by the end of 2026.

⁽¹⁾ According to the report 'Health at a Glance: Europe 2024: State of Health in the EU Cycle', the proportion of 15-year-olds in the EU reporting multiple physical and psychological problems, rose from 42% in 2017-2018 to 52% in 2021-2022, with this rate reaching 68% among 15-year-old girls.

⁽²⁾ Eurofound — Mental health: Risk groups, trends, services and policies, <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/publications/all/mental-health-risk-groups-trends-services-and-policies>. According to a WHO survey on children's mental health in the EU, one in seven children live with a mental health condition.

⁽³⁾ It is estimated that 67.5% of people in need of mental healthcare in the EU do not have access to treatment.

⁽⁴⁾ On 20 June 2025, the Council called for greater efforts to protect the mental health of children and adolescents in the digital era, through the safe and healthy use of digital tools and the creation of a healthier, safer and more age-appropriate digital environment.

⁽⁵⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/public-health/european-health-union/comprehensive-approach-mental-health_en.

⁽⁶⁾ <https://www.unicef.org/eca/press-releases/european-commission-and-unicef-announce-new-partnership-improve-health-outcomes>.

⁽⁷⁾ <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3686>.

⁽⁸⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/digital-economy-and-society/special-panel_en.

⁽⁹⁾ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/proposal-eu-kids-act-eu-keeping-Internet-digital-spaces-accountable-and-trustworthy>.

⁽¹⁰⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/digital-services-act.html>.

⁽¹¹⁾ <https://better-Internet-for-kids.europa.eu/en>.

⁽¹²⁾ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/safer-Internet-centres>.

⁽¹³⁾ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/cyberbullying>.

The forthcoming Education Package will support Member States in helping children and young people develop the skills needed to use artificial intelligence and digital technologies safely and responsibly. Digital literacy, critical thinking and resilience is further boosted through Erasmus+ Youth.

The Commission supports living conditions that are good for mental health through the European affordable housing plan, by fighting housing exclusion and by promoting quality jobs.
