



MENTOR Project Kick-Off Conference in Riga Brought Together European Leaders to Advance Mental Health Initiatives across the EU



The kick-off conference of JA MENTOR took place 7th -8th October, 2024 in Riga and brought together representatives from 43 partner organizations from 20 countries across Europe, who joined forces to improve mental health, de-stigmatising mental illness and promoting mental health in all policies.

The conference was hosted by the Latvian National Centre of Mental Health and launched the work of a 3-year adventure towards better mental health for all.

Policymakers, leading international experts and mental health professionals had the opportunity to discussed the future of mental health policy, prevention and support across Europe.

The conference was opened with remarks from project leaders: Sibilla Laura Neimane and Liene Sile from the NPVC, alongside distinguished speakers such as Agnese Vaļulīne, State Secretary of the Ministry of Health of Latvia, and Anna Bulzacka-Bogucka from the European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA). The meeting agenda included presentations from following work packages:

- ✦ project management and coordination (WP1),
- ✦ communication and dissemination (WP2),
- ✦ evaluation (WP3),
- ✦ sustainability (WP4),
- ✦ establishing integrated mental health actions (WP5),
- ✦ digital innovation (WP6).



Day 1 Agenda included:

project overview and consortium engagement: updates on MENTOR's progress and objectives, interactive discussions, and team presentations from all WP teams.

Synergy Building: an expert session spotlighted partnerships with other EU mental health initiatives, emphasizing MENTOR's collaboration with projects like impleMENTAL and preventNCD.

Showcasing Digital Presentation: Norway's WP6 team presented strategies for utilizing digital technology to promote mental health across Europe.

Day 2 was devoted to:

Expert-led discussions focused around practical approaches to integrating mental health in all policies, promoting social inclusion for individuals with mental health disorders, and piloting innovative tools for mental health monitoring. Devora Kestel, WHO's Director, Mental Health, Brain Health and Substance Use Department and Ledia Lazeri, Regional Adviser for Mental Health at WHO, highlighted the importance of sustainable mental health policies and technology-driven solutions to improve mental health.

Project Vision and Future Impact

The conference marked a crucial step towards MENTOR's goal of achieving long-term impacts on mental health policy and practice within Europe. By establishing new standards, tools, and partnerships, the project sets out to reduce the social and economic burdens of mental health problems and contribute to the EU's comprehensive approach to public health.