Unter dem Ehrenschutz des LHM von Salzburg Dr. Wilfried Haslauer

4b PREPARATION MODULE

Committee on Public Health (SANT)

The question of digital technology's impact on EU citizens' mental health

Digital technology has become an increasingly big part of our personal and professional lives, as well as of our health care systems. Developments and technologies such as social media, electronic health records, apps, Artificial Intelligence (AI), telehealth and games all bring new opportunities and risks to mental wellbeing and the mental health care field. The impact of these risks and opportunities is likely to be unevenly distributed across the population.

How can the EU provide the necessary measures to minimize negative impact of digital technology and promote positive opportunities in an equal and inclusive way?

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the national session of the Model European Parliament in Salzburg. We, the Committee Presidents, are thrilled to have you join us for the SANT committee!

During this session you will be debating the question of digital technology and its impact on Eu citizen's mental health. The increasing integration of digital technology into everyday life, healthcare systems, and mental health care offers both opportunities and challenges for EU citizens' mental health. Technologies like social media, AI, health apps, and telehealth can improve mental health care access and innovation but also pose risks such as data privacy concerns, misinformation, and the mental strain of digital overuse. These impacts vary across different population groups, highlighting inequalities. To address this, the EU must adopt inclusive policies to mitigate risks—such as enforcing strong digital rights, promoting digital literacy, and ensuring equitable access to technology—while fostering the benefits of innovation in a fair and inclusive manner.

With this in mind, it is of great importance that all delegates are adequately prepared before our discussions in Salzburg, so you have a well-rounded knowledge of the topic we will be discussing. We've compiled some links and resources to help you prepare. These links are meant to give you a good understanding of the subject, but you are encouraged to research *even more on your own*.

Your committee presidents,
Sophia Zwantschko and Sofia Guimaraes

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Exspectations

Every delegate will have to hand in a position paper by January 8th, which should include:

1. An overview of the issue
2. The EU's actions on the matter so far
3. The personal opinion of the delegate in regard to what the committee should focus on during the meetings
4. Length of 1-1.5 pages max
5. Format: 12 pt Times New Roman, 1.15 spacing, full justification

Submit by: Wed 8.1. 25, 20hoo CET to your CPs

In your research, focus on finding answers to the following questions:

1. How do digital technologies like social media, AI, and health apps contribute to improving mental health care for EU citizens
2. How does digital technology in the EU's health sector, such as telehealth and health apps, shape mental health treatment and access to care?
3. To what extent does misinformation on digital platforms contribute to changes in mental health, and what measures may need to be taken to reduce the associated risks?
4. How does the digital divide in the EU affect access to mental health resources and services?
5. In what ways can policies of the EU address the inequalities in the access to digital technologies for mental health support?
6. What kinds of inclusive policies might be promoted by the EU in using digital technologies in mental health care for the benefit of all citizens?
7. How will the EU promote innovation of digital technologies for mental health while ensuring citizens' wellbeing is protected?
8. What are the future trends in digital technologies that could influence mental health care in the EU, and how can the EU get ready for these changes?

Research References:

The materials below offer an excellent opportunity to engage with the subject. Remember that while you may already possess personal experiences related to this topic, these links aim to provide a broader perspective. Don't worry about reading every single article; it's not like we will

quiz you. We would also like to encourage you to do your own research into this issue. Try to aim for the newest stuff (you know, preferably from this century), find things the EU has already done, and then brainstorm to come up with some brilliant ideas of your own to solve the issue at hand.

1. AI

- Harnessing the Potential of AI (DIGITAL AUSTRIA) https://www.digitalaustria.gv.at/eng/strategy/strategy-AI-AIM-AT-2030.html
- Ethical Considerations concerning the use of AI for mental health and well being https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/13/7/381
- AI Act by the European Commission https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-a-europe-fit-for-the-digital-age/file-regulation-on-artificial-intelligence
- General knowledge about AI https://aiindex.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/2022-AI-Index-Report_Master.pdf
- Privacy risks of AI https://www.loeb.com/en/insights/publications/2022/03/ai-in-ed-tech-privacy-considerations-for-aipowered-ed-tech-tools
- Useful sources for articles about AI in education artificial-intelligence

2. General Knowledge

- Provides a clear overview of the effects of technology on mental health and presents solutions to this problem https://citizenadvocates.net/blog/the-impact-of-technology-on-mental-health-balancing-connection-and-screen-time/
- Presents the effects of screen time on mental health and sleeping schedules, also provides a few solutions to this problem https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/09/screen-time-affecting-sleep-mental-health/

- Solutions to sleeping issues https://www.circlehealthgroup.co.uk/health-matters/mental-health/modern-technology-and-mental-health
- Offers a detailed review on mental health in the digital age, from a psychological angle https://www.mentalhealtheurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Mental-health-in-the-digital-age-Applying-a-human-rights-based-psychosocial-approach-as-compass.pdf

3. European Union and the WHO

- Detailed information about how the EU ensures a safe use of technology (e.g. Cyber Resilience Act) https://eavi.eu/eu-policies-on-digital-well-being/
- European Commission https://health.ec.europa.eu/non-communicable-diseases/mental-health_en
- European Health Union https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/european-health-union/comprehensive-approach-mental-health_en
- European Commission https://health.ec.europa.eu/document/download/6317c605-5f5d-4d4f-9c8a-d5c93e869814_en?filename=ncd_tracking-framework-mh_en.pdf
Mental health - European Commission
A comprehensive approach to mental health - European Commission

  - The EU's attempts at bettering mental health: Focus on prevention, cross-sector collaboration, stigma reduction, and improved services through initiatives like €1.23 billion in funding.
  - Bills or actions passed: Policies integrate mental health into broader areas like education, work, and crisis response (e.g., COVID-19, Ukraine war), rather than stand-alone mental health legislation.

- Report from the World Health Organization https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/25-09-2024-teens--screens-and-mental-health
- European framework for action on mental health https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/352549/9789289057813-eng.pdf
DIGITALEUROPE Executive Council for Health's recommendations for EU digital health policy (2024-29) - DIGITALEUROPE
- Executive Council for Health's recommendations for EU Digital health policy https://www.digitaleurope.org/resources/digitaleurope-recommendations-eu-digital-health-policy-2024-29/
  - Focus on digital transformation: Prioritizes integration of digital technologies like AI and data science into EU health policies.
  - European Health Data Space (EHDS): Advocates for its implementation to improve data sharing and health insights.
  - Funding and skills development: Calls for dedicated resources and training for health professionals in digital health.
  - Legal and policy alignment: Emphasizes harmonized standards, data protection, and international collaboration.

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- Safer Internet Day https://hadea.ec.europa.eu/news/safer-internet-day-2024-addressing-risks-digital-services-mental-health-and-well-being-across-hadea-2024-02-13_en
    - o Safer Internet Day 2024: Focus on addressing risks of digital services to mental health, especially for children and youth.
    - o EU Initiatives: Includes the *Better Internet for Kids* strategy and €1.23 billion funding under mental health projects.
    - o Training and Tools: Resources for professionals to improve digital literacy and help manage screen use and online behaviors.
    - o EU4Health & Horizon Europe: Programs targeting problematic internet use and promoting digital empowerment for better health management.
- Barriers and facilitators of the implementation of digital technologies in mental health systems

    https://bmchealthservres.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12913-023-10536-1

    - o Focus: Understanding what helps or blocks the use of digital tools in mental healthcare.
    - o Main Challenges: Digital tools can feel impersonal, many people lack the skills to use them, and healthcare systems aren't ready for widespread use.
    - o What Helps: Customizing tools to people's needs, training professionals, involving users in design, and having strong leadership.
    - o Recommendations: Improve access to digital mental health services, ensure data privacy, use tools alongside traditional care, and support public-private teamwork.