

Brussels, the 3rd of September 2021

CBBA-Europe announces its upcoming campaign to handle and face mental health matters in Europe and its tremendous effects on millions of European workers especially as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic: press release

Some preliminary information about the impact of the pandemic on mental health in Europe

The Covid pandemic made depression raise of 9% in France (19% of the overall population suffers this pathology), of 6% anxiety (21% of the total population), of 14% of sleeping troubles (64% of the population) and of 4% suicide thoughts (8,5% of the total)¹.

Almost half of the Portuguese population believe that their global health worsened with the Covid pandemic, and one in five considers that the same happened with their mental health². In particular, the Covid pandemic had “a significant negative impact on mental health of young Portuguese people, especially on levels of depression and anxiety³”. Indeed, young adults and women mainly symptoms of anxiety and moderate to severe depression⁴.

In Belgium anxiety and depressive troubles raised between 2020 and 2021 (from 11% in 2018 to a range between 16% and 21% in 2020/2021), and depression raised from 9,5% in 2018 and a range from 14% and 22% in 2020/2021). These phenomena are particularly high among the young population (18-29 year) and women.

Suicide thoughts and suicide attempts raised as well: one fourth of young clearly admitted of having seriously thought of suicide in the previous 12 months⁵. Finally, a survey about the “life satisfaction” showed that while in 2018 12% declared of being poorly satisfied of their lives, in September 2020 this data raised to 22% and to 32% in December 2020 and March 2021.

Teleworking also had an impressive impact on the well-being of Europeans: while for example in Portugal 83% of the interviewed declared that this form of work could have -at least in principle- a positive impact on their lives, the same survey⁶ pointed out that difficulty in reconciling work-family, in addition to other issues such as the concern with maintaining work or preserving income, the perception of less social or family support and the concern

¹ [CoviPrev : une enquête pour suivre l'évolution des comportements et de la santé mentale pendant l'épidémie de COVID-19 \(santepubliquefrance.fr\)](https://santepubliquefrance.fr)

² <https://sicnoticias.pt/especiais/saude-mental/2021-03-23-Um-em-cada-cinco-portugueses-considera-que-saude-mental-piorou-com-a-pandemia-7c853bd5>

³ <https://www.publico.pt/2021/02/24/p3/noticia/pandemia-impacto-negativo-saude-mental-jovens-portugueses-1951917>

⁴ <https://covid19.min-saude.pt/insa-divulga-resultados-do-estudo-saude-mental-em-tempos-de-pandemia/>

⁵ <https://www.belgiqueenbonnesante.be/fr/etat-de-sante/crise-covid-19/impact-du-covid-19>

⁶ “RESEARCH 4 COVID-19” study funded by the Foundation for Science and Technology reported in <https://www.jn.pt/nacional/sete-em-dez-portugueses-em-quarentena-acusaram-sofrimento-psicologico-13211665.html>

for the future are relevant determinants of mental health problems in the general population and also in health professionals.

At the same time, while financial and work issues, as a recent study has identified⁷, are the most significant cause of stress in our lives globally, dealing with them is a complex issue. Indeed, it was found that:

- A majority of people make a clear link between physical and mental health. People's self-perception of stress has a direct impact on their self-perception of overall healthiness
- The pandemic led to a heightened awareness of mental health issues, including stress and anxiety. This was more prominent among women and younger generations.
- There is an overwhelming stigma around mental health and 'psychological' barriers to seek professional help are still high.

The so called TICTM workers (telework and ICT-based workers) already reported in 2015 remarkable problems on work-life balance (the 15% without kids and 19% with kids) and working time during their free time (40% of home-based workers compared to the 20% of no-TICTM workers). During the Covid crisis home-based workers raised significantly until 40% of the overall workforce in some Countries.

Before 2020 and the Covid-19 pandemic, 84 million people were already diagnosed with mental health issues (1 out of 6).

The overall cost of this phenomenon was estimated in 600 billion €, which is the 4% of the EU GDP.

In some EU countries mental health issues costed more than 5% of the GDP coming from:
31% health spending;
28% social benefits (i.e. unemployment benefits);
and 40% other indirect costs related to this matter.

Granted that the Covid pandemic will obviously worsen the previous data, it should be also kept in mind that the Covid era will have potential long-term impacts on mental health, as also declared by Stella Kyriakides, EU Commissioner for Health in October 2020: *".... Whilst we cannot yet evaluate the risk, we know that the long-term impacts will be significant"*.

The CBBA-Europe campaign to make mental health a priority in our societies

In the light of the aforementioned information and data about the dramatic impact of mental health issues in Europe, the Cross Border Benefits Alliance-Europe (CBBA-Europe) strongly urges the EU decision makers to effective actions aimed at addressing such challenge.

⁷ "The stress pandemic at work: What we learned from consumer data": joint study joint study on mental health ReMark-Workplace Options.
https://www.workplaceoptions.co.uk/press_release/the-stress-pandemic-at-work-what-we-learned-from-consumer-data/ and <https://www.remarkgroup.com/en/insights/the-stress-pandemic-at-work-what-we-learned-from-consumer-data>

A webinar on this issue was already held by CBBA-Europe together with the American Benefits Council the last 8 April 2020 entitled “Benefits Passport Webinar: Workplace Wellness in the Telework Era”

CBBA-Europe will launch a campaign to sensitize the European and national authorities, employers, workers, and the overall public opinion on the risks of mental health issues for our societies.

The campaign will be carried out through public events, studies, policy recommendations, interviews, and exchange of good practices.

CBBA-Europe will also prepare a white paper reporting data, the concrete problems in identifying and dealing with issues related to mental health, comparisons across different countries and possible solutions both at company/employer and normative/legislative level on how to better promote mental health.

CBBA-Europe plans to involve decision makers, HR departments of employers, experts, companies specialized in mental health programs, insurance companies, workers’ representatives, charities, media and other associations dealing with these matters.

After all, as the aforementioned study reported, there is a real necessity of building partnerships across ecosystems.

Mental health has been for years a serious issue for millions of Europeans and our companies, families and economies. The Covid pandemic and its consequences made it so serious that there is no more time to wait to seriously face this challenge at all the levels of our societies!

Anyone interested in participating in the upcoming CBBA-Europe initiatives for the safeguard of mental health in Europe will be welcome to contact us.

Some information about the Cross Border Benefits Alliance-Europe (CBBA-Europe)

The Cross-Border Benefits Alliance-Europe (CBBA-Europe), is a Brussels based advocacy organization (Belgian AISBL) promoting the creation of cross border and pan-European social benefits in the European Economic Area (EEA), including pensions (occupational and individual), healthcare insurance, mental health programs, unemployment benefits, long term care insurance, etc.

Indeed, CBBA-Europe considers the current excessive fragmentation of national social systems as detrimental to the creation of a European common market based on economies of scale and on the removal of costly and burdensome barriers in particular for citizens; but also detrimental to free movement of services, capitals and persons.

More generally, CBBA-Europe wishes the European Union to become a more interconnected economic and social area, where both economic competitiveness, with more efficiency in delivering benefits, and the protection of social rights assured to companies and citizens.

As for its structure, CBBA-Europe is a transversal Alliance made up of stakeholders with different backgrounds, including multinational companies, trade unions, asset managers, pension funds, insurance companies, wellbeing/wellness programmes' providers, consumers' organizations, national and international trade associations. Just created in October 2017, CBBA-Europe already has more than twenty members, and is still rapidly growing.

CBBA-Europe also relies on a Scientific Council made up of well-known experts and professors from the most prestigious Universities of Europe. The Scientific Council provides content for the half-yearly CBBA-Europe Review, which is available on the website of the Association.

Finally, in addition to its activities of monitoring and publication of position papers, CBBA-Europe organizes several public meetings throughout Europe with national and European decision makers and stakeholders.

For more information about CBBA-Europe, please visit our website: www.cbba-europe.eu

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