

# TREATme Input to the drafted strategic plan for Horizon Europe Co-design 2021-2024

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## SECTION B – WHERE SHOULD HORIZON EUROPE PLAY ITS GREATEST ROLE?

European security and the well-being of our citizens are in our view, the main role of Horizon Europe research and innovation investments in addressing challenges.

Good health and well-being are in our view, the main role of Horizon Europe research and innovation investments in addressing challenges.

*TREATme's comments on where Horizon Europe should play its greatest role in terms of global challenges, Sustainable Development Goals, and EU policy priorities.*

The European Commission and WHO have identified mental health prevention and promotion as a primary need that requires urgent action by authorities and professionals. The number of adolescents affected by mental health conditions is sadly expected to grow, in part because adolescents have often been overlooked in global health and social policies. Substantial investment in adolescent health and wellbeing is needed to achieve the healthiest generation of adolescents today and for generations to come.

## SECTION C - WHAT KIND OF IMPACTS SHOULD HORIZON EUROPE TARGET?

*TREATme emphasize:*

Healthy citizens in a rapidly changing society

Healthy and health-promoting living and working environments

Effective health services to tackle diseases and reduce the burden of diseases

Improved access to innovative, sustainable and high-quality health care

Unlocking the full potential of new tools, technologies and digital solutions for a healthy society

Reversing socio-economic and gender inequalities

## SECTION D - MORE IN DETAIL ON THE "ORIENTATIONS" DOCUMENT

*TREATme's input to Health (cluster 1) in the drafted Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe*

Personalized medicine and identification of personalized treatment options are mentioned as part of Tackling diseases. In the annex 1 (cluster 1, health) it is noted that mental disorders are one of the biggest global challenges, and that there is a huge unused potential for prevention. Yet, in the targeted impacts no suggestions for supported activities focus directly on mental health nor mention youth.

Encouraging an increase of research investments to preventive actions with youth in community settings (e.g. schools), primary health care, and specialist care would be important. Also supporting research to



increase the knowledge on effective treatments, and especially on what works to whom and why, should be a high priority.

A lot of the document is focused on technology and digital innovations to improve the effectiveness and accessibility of health care, but it is important to also keep in mind that not all people especially in vulnerable groups have access or are capable of utilizing digital services on their own, but need support for it.

Mental health problems are wide-ranging, long-lasting, and enormous and impose a range of costs on individuals, families and communities. Despite the huge personal and economic costs of mental ill health, mental health research is disproportionately underfunded, as revealed by the 'Joint statement to invest in mental health research and a European Implementation Partnership on Mental Health and Wellbeing' signed by a large number of institutions, stakeholders and networks.

Mental disorders are first identified in adolescence: 50% of lifetime mental health disorders start by the age of 14, and this number increases to 75% by the age of 24. Cost-benefit economic studies reveal that intervening earlier in life can reduce health burden and more effective than later treatment. Implementing prevention programs during adolescence when behaviour is more amenable to change is likely to produce better treatment outcomes than delivered in adulthood. The economic, social and personal costs of emotional problems among adolescents are extraordinarily high, so they have been considered priority conditions covered by WHO's Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP). All of this points to this age period as a sensitive window of opportunity to address psychopathology at the population level, maximizing the efficiency, efficacy and cost-effectiveness of interventions aimed at improving mental health.

Several documents have addressed the need for investing in mental health and wellbeing in young adults. First, according to the Roadmap for Mental Health Research (ROAMER), it is broadly acknowledged that early detection and developing early interventions aimed at children and adolescents offers the opportunity to minimize the mental difficulties' burden. Second, the document "Addressing the health needs of adolescents in Europe", a report drawn up by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, which is attached to the Council of Europe, advocates support for increasing investment in adolescent health to benefit the well-being of future generations and societies. Third, the White Paper, authored by the COST Action (CA16102) TREATme, the European Network on Individualized Psychotherapy Treatment of Young People with Mental Disorders, call for a coordinated joint European effort to address this urgent question by providing funding opportunities for large-scale applied clinical research on individualized youth psychotherapy. Finally, the roadmap launched by PROEM Spanish network stresses as first priority the need for developing and implementing early detection protocols and evidence-based psychotherapy interventions in schools and health interventions designed to treat mental disorders, (cyber)victimization, self-harm, and suicidal ideation and attempts in adolescents.

**CONCLUSION:** Addressing on mental health and wellbeing promotion for young people as well as research in this field, will meet a significant strategic societal challenge given that the emotional health of the younger generation is of the greatest importance for the future and the growth in the European Research Area.

