

EN

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Answer given by Ms Kyriakides
on behalf of the European Commission
(24.5.2023)

The 2022 edition of the Health at a Glance report¹ showed that, in many Member States, the number of young people reporting symptoms of depression more than doubled during the pandemic and about 50% of young people reported unmet needs for mental health care.

Similarly, UNICEF's report on 'The State of the World's Children'² in 2022 warned that children and young people may indeed feel the negative impact of the pandemic on their mental health for many years to come. The pandemic's role in breaking down the ties binding to family, friends or schoolmates was the focus of the April 2023 Swedish Presidency's high-level meeting on loneliness and mental health.

While the Commission does not plan to launch a study on hikikomori, it is working on a comprehensive, prevention-oriented approach to mental health, supporting better coordination across policies, and also addressing socioeconomic and environmental determinants that affect mental health.

In line with all EU health policymaking, the focus of this new mental health initiative (which is planned in the form of a Commission Communication), is on supporting people in vulnerable circumstances. In addition to the ongoing projects on mental health funded under the EU4Health 2021, 2022 and 2023 work programmes³, it is planned that the future Communication will look at improving access to prevention, treatment and care, including for children and young people.

¹ https://health.ec.europa.eu/state-health-eu/health-glance-europe_en#health-at-a-glance-europe-2022

² <https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-of-worlds-children>

³ These include two projects, 'Ice hearts' and 'Let's talk about children', (each worth EUR 4 million) which aim to implement two best practices to address vulnerable children and adolescents.