

An Introduction from MEP Jarosław Duda (EPP)

Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I'd like to welcome all of you to this event.

Thank you to my MEP colleague Alex Agius Saliba and his assistants, thank you to PAREA and the European Brain Council for an excellent collaboration in organizing this event. And thank you too all of you for coming in such large numbers – both physically, and I was told that nearly 300 people registered online. This clearly shows that the topic that we will discuss today is important.



Let me briefly introduce myself: in the European Parliament, I'm a member of the committee of the Social and Family Policy as well as Petitions committee. I'm also co-chairing the MEP Interest Group on Brain, Mind and Pain and I'm a member of a disability intergroup. My whole political career, I've been focusing on supporting vulnerable groups, be it people with disabilities, people affected by health problems or experiencing financial hardship.

Lately, I have been paying a lot of attention to brain disorders. They exert a huge burden on Europeans. More than half of us will be affected by at least one brain condition at some point in our lives – such as depression, migraine, or alcohol use disorder. At the same time, we don't have the tools to truly help many people in need.

I have been saying for quite some time now that Europe needs a Brain Health Strategy which takes into account both scientific research, prevention as well as education of teachers, health care professionals and social workers.

Moreover, such strategy should include raising awareness about stigma and discrimination of people affected by mental health conditions and their families. It also needs to include solutions to improve high quality health care and specialized treatments.

It is with great pleasure that I note a commitment from the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to present a mental health strategy in mid-2023.

I'm also encouraged by new innovations that hold a promise to completely change the lives of patients. Psychedelic compounds are one such extremely promising area. Psychedelic-assisted therapies can be a potent new class of treatments for mental, neurological and substance use disorders and I believe that we should explore their potential as seriously as possible.

That's because we badly need new treatments for brain disorders and consequently, we need to explore further research on psychedelic novel treatments. I'm convinced that funds spent on scientific research is one of the best investments.

Moreover, I believe that to achieve a real progress in these areas, we need collaboration from all the parties: EU Institutions, research centres, private sector, national and regional governments as well as affected people and their families.

This is why I'm delighted to be part of today's conference, I'm eager to learn more about psychedelic therapies and hear your remarks. Without further ado, I hand back to the moderator.