Third International Conference on Mental Health and Wellbeing of Children and Young People in Serbia

TOGETHER
ON THE SAME SIDE

4 October 2024 / Hotel Metropol Palace, Belgrade

The third Conference on youth mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), a lead-up to **the International Mental Health Day on 10 October 2024,** will emphasize the importance of intersectoral cooperation and the necessity of uniting all available resources to ensure comprehensive support for children, youth and caregivers in the prevention and protection of mental health in Serbia. The conference provides an opportunity to review MHPSS programmes across the social-ecological model and the mental health continuum of care. This includes the prevention, promotion, and treatment to improve the mental health and psychosocial well-being of children, adolescents and caregivers and available resources and good practice examples existing in Serbia, as well as to assess current challenges and shortcomings to collaboratively create a strategy for improving the support system for children, youth, caregivers, and professionals working locally in the field of mental health protection.

The conference presents an invaluable opportunity to assess the progress made in the one-year implementation of the **Memorandum of Understanding**, which was jointly signed by six ministries: the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Tourism and Youth, the Ministry of Labour Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, and the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography. During this period, the MHPSS Working Group, led by the Ministry of Health, was established. Furthermore, a Plan of Activities has been developed, delineating roles and responsibilities across sectors and establishing clear collaboration channels. Locally, significant progress has been achieved through the signing of Local protocols in several cities, setting an example of successful collaboration among local institutions to create optimal support for children, youth and caregivers locally.

Additionally, the conference will showcase both domestic and international best practices that can serve as key drivers in the process of improving the overall support system for children, youth and caregivers. Above all, this is an opportunity to introduce innovative service models such as the Minimum Service Package developed in collaboration with the Institute for Mental Health, telehealth services, and community services through youth centres developed in partnership with the OPENS network. The conference will gather national and international experts from a range of backgrounds, professionals from the four sectors, policy makers, representatives of health centres, schools, social welfare centres and youth organizations to exchange and discuss around challenges and best practices.

Expected outcomes:

- Collective review of the **progress achieved in the one-year implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding**. This assessment will highlight achievements, challenges, lessons learnt and areas for improvement in enhancing the mental health support system for children, youth, caregivers, and professionals at the local level.
- **Showcasing best practices and introduction of innovative service models.** These models aim to address the evolving needs of children, youth and caregivers by leveraging technology, multisectoral and community-based approaches.
- **Collaboration and exchange among professionals from various sectors, policy makers, leaders and practitioners from health centres, schools, social welfare centres and youth organizations.** Through discussions and exchanges, participants will identify synergies, share challenges, and explore collaborative strategies to strengthen the mental health support system for children, youth and caregivers in Serbia.

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AGENDA

09:00 – 10:00	**Registration** Facilitation: **Stanislava Vučković**, UNICEF Serbia Youth & Adolescent Development Specialist and **Bogdan Dimić** UNICEF's Youth Board member
10:00 – 10:30	**Opening remarks** • **Tamara Vučić**, First Lady of Republic of Serbia (TBC) • **Milos Vučević**, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia (TBC) • **Deyana Kostadinova**, UNICEF Representative for Serbia • **Džana Numanović**, UNICEF Serbia Youth Board member
10:30 – 10:45	**Keynote Speech** **Why Multi-sectoral Approach Matters for Mental Health of Children and Young People** • Dr. **Gabriele Fontana**, UNICEF Regional Health Adviser for Europe, and Central Asia
10.45 – 12:00	**Panel discussion – Ensuring Access to Quality Multisectoral MHPSS Services for Children and Youth in Serbia** *One year of implementation of the MoU on MHPSS in Serbia: successes, challenges, lessons learnt.* • Dr. **Zlatibor Lončar**, Minister of Health of the Republic of Serbia • Dr. **Slavica Đukić Dejanović**, Minister of Education of the Republic of Serbia • **Husein Memić**, Minister of Tourism and Youth of the Republic of Serbia (TBC) • **Nemanja Starović**, Minister of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs of the Republic of Serbia • **Tomislav Žigmanov**, Minister of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue of the Republic of Serbia (TBC) • **Milica Đurđević Stamenkovski**, Minister of Family Welfare and Demography (TBC) Moderator: **Deyana Kostadinova**, UNICEF Representative for Serbia
12:00 – 12:30	**Media Statements – Coffee Break**
12:30 – 12:35	Video – **Collective Efforts for Enhancing Youth Mental Well-being**

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12:35 – 13:35	**Panel discussion – *Policy and Program Development and Perspectives on MHPSS System Support*** (sharing experiences, models, lessons learnt from other countries including data) • **Sofyen Khalfaoui,** The Z Zurich Foundation – Creating a Global Movement to Improve the Mental Wellbeing of Young People – **The importance of including all actors and unifying efforts lies in leveraging all available resources to support the further development of the support system (online participation)** • Dr. **Milica Pejović Milovančević**, Director of the Institute of Mental Health **– Support Professionals Working in Relevant Sectors and Areas of Work – Including Health, Social Welfare and Child Protection, Education and Youth** • Dr. **Verica Jovanović**, Director of the Institute of Public Health of Serbia "Dr Milan Jovanovic-Batut" – **Improving the Data Collection System in the Field of Mental Health Prevention and Protection in Serbia, for Policy Planning and Improving Health Outcomes and Cooperation in Systems** • **Leah James**, Regional Mental Health & Psychosocial Support Specialist (ECARO) – **UNICEF Approaches and Training Packages to Support Provision of Innovative MHPSS Services** Moderator: **Carole Vignaud**, UNICEF Serbia Deputy Representative
13:35 – 14:30	**Lunch Break**
14:30 – 15:45	**Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Children and Youth in their Communities** *Experiences from Serbia and abroad* • **Ivana Antonijević,** Assistant Minister of Tourism and Youth – Establishing Youth Centres as a Mechanism for Support and Empowerment of Young People • **Simo Salapura,** Mayor of Zrenjanin and **Olivera Lisica,** Director of the Centre for Social Work Zrenjanin – **Protocol on Cooperation in the Field of Protection and Improvement of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Children and Youth** • **Vukašin Grozdanović**, Director, OPENS Youth Centre – **Youth Centre Model Novi Sad, Serbia** • **Ksenja Perko**, General Manager, Ljubljana Youth Centre – **Youth Centre Model Slovenia** • Dr. **Victor Ugo**, MHPSS and Youth Engagement Advisor – **Meaningful Engagement and Participation of Children and Young People at All Levels of Programming, Research and Advocacy in Mental Health** Moderator: **Bojana Jevtović**, UNICEF Serbia MHPSS focal point
15:45 – 16:00	**Media Statements – Coffee Break**

16:00 – 17:15 **Innovative Solutions in MHPSS: Bridging Gaps in Mental Health Care at Local Levels**

Examples of good practices in supporting children and youth in the field of mental health across different sectors

- Dr. **Marija Mitković Vončina**, the Institute of Mental Health – **The Youth MHPSS Minimum Service Package Guide" for MHPSS Professionals in the Health, Social, and Education Sectors** and **"The Telehealth Guide" Specifically Designed for the Health Sector**
- **Radovan Prodanović**, **"I support my friend" methodology in Serbia**
- **Anna Kagstrom**, National Institute of Mental Health, Prague, Czech Republic – **Building Mental Health Literacy in Schools: Key Barriers, Facilitators and Results of a Randomized Controlled Trial in Czechia**
- **Aleksandra Kalezić Vignjević i Aleksandra Lakićević**, CIP – Centar za interaktivnu pedagogiju – **Improving the well-being of children in schools through effective Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) approaches**

Moderator: **Stanislava Vučković**, UNICEF Serbia Youth & Adolescent Development Specialist

17:15 – 17:30 **Conclusions and Next Steps**