ESHMS

EUROPEAN SOCIETY OF HEALTH AND MEDICAL SOCIOLOGY

UKE HAMBURG | Institute of Medical Sociology

Mental Health in Times of Uncertainty

PROGRAMME & BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

THE 21ST BIENNIAL ESHMS CONFERENCE

19–21 August 2026

University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf, Hamburg, Germany

www.eshms.org

Welcome address from the local organizing committee

Dear colleagues,



it is a great pleasure to welcome you to the 21st biennial conference of the European Society of Health and Medical Sociology (ESHMS) in Hamburg. In this conference, we will explore the critical theme of "Mental Health in Times of Uncertainty".

The current global scenario is characterized by systemic and deep-rooted uncertainties. Climate change and natural hazards, armed conflicts, displacement, and pandemics contribute to the spread of uncertainty. According to the World Health Organization, fear, worry and stress are normal responses at times when we are faced with uncertainty or the unknown. Thus, the link between uncertainty and mental health is a highly topical and critical public health issue. Health and medical sociology can make important contributions to understanding the role of social and cultural factors for mental health in times of uncertainty. With the conference, we would like to promote dialogue, exchange of ideas and current findings, collaboration, and shared learning on this topic.

Hamburg has a long tradition in health and medical sociology. The Institute of Medical Sociology at the University Medical Center Hamburg Eppendorf was founded more than 50 years ago. We are honoured to welcome our international colleagues in Hamburg and wish you a stimulating, productive, and enjoyable congress, as well as a pleasant stay.

Looking forward to meeting you all in Hamburg!

Olaf v.d. Knesebeck

(for the local organizing committee)

Welcome address from the ESHMS

Dear colleagues,



It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 21st conference of the European Society for Health and Medical Sociology (ESHMS) in Hamburg, dedicated to the “Mental Health in Times of Uncertainty”, and organised by our wonderful colleagues from the Institute of Medical Sociology in Hamburg.

Our scientific community has grown significantly through regular activities designed to foster professional growth and collaboration. We have successfully established recurring sessions such as “Meet the Editors,” “Write a Peer-Review,” and our creative workshops during our conferences. We have strengthened our commitment to early-career researchers by supporting workshops and summer schools. Furthermore, we have launched the Excellence Prize in Health and Medical Sociology to reward the best paper in the discipline, open to all authors regardless of seniority. Our digital presence has also expanded, with new contributions enriching the ESHMS blog “Voices in health sociology”, edited by Liubov Borisova.

ESHMS is also now honouring the discipline and its own history by appointing two honorary members at each conference. This title is bestowed upon scholars whose work has significantly marked the discipline or who have dedicated themselves to the well-being of the Society. We are particularly proud to introduce this distinction, as it provides a long-overdue opportunity to formally recognize and celebrate the contributions of those who have shaped our field.

As we gather here, please note that 2026 is an election year for our Society for the 2026–2030 term. The Advisory Board will be up for re-election for those who wish to continue, and we have two seats available. I want to thank Laura Kestilä and Veronica Moretti for their participation in the Board, with special thanks to Veronica for the numerous activities she organized during her term, particularly regarding Artivism. I am confident that the future Board will strengthen the Society’s sustainability, continue its current activities, and develop new initiatives.

On a personal note, this conference marks the conclusion of my tenure as President after two terms (2019-2026), though I will remain on the Advisory Board. It has been a privilege to serve you, and I am confident that the Society is in a strong position for its next chapter.

I wish you a stimulating exchange of ideas, fruitful networking, and a pleasant stay in Hamburg.

Stéphane Cullati

President, ESHMS

Parallel Sessions 3 (Thursday, 20th of August 2026, 09:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.)

Discrimination and mental health III

314 Author(s): Mira Fey, Leona Hakkaart-van Roijen, Neil Mac Dhonnagáin, Adam McBride, Jeff Moore, Stijn Peeters
„Re-thinking access to mental health care for LGBTQI+ Communities: Applying the Levesque framework in Ireland“

Introduction: LGBTQI+ populations experience significantly poorer mental health outcomes than the general population, driven by minority stress, discrimination, and structural exclusion from health and social care systems. While inequalities in mental health outcomes are well documented, less attention has been paid to how access to mental health care is produced, constrained, or negotiated in practice. We address this gap by applying and extending the Levesque et al. access-to-care framework (2013) to mental health services for LGBTQI+ people in Ireland. The aims of the study are (1) to identify access barriers to mental health care for the LGBTQI+ population in Ireland as well as related solutions, and (2) to better understand how LGBTQI+ people experience and navigate mental health care access in Ireland while potentially facing discrimination.
Methods: The study draws on the Irish case within the EQUICARES Horizon Europe project, using a mixed-methods design. Data collection includes surveys and reflective diaries with LGBTQI+ service users, alongside expert interviews with policymakers, service providers, researchers, and community organisations. Analysis is explicitly structured around Levesque's conceptualisation of access as the interaction between service characteristics (approachability, acceptability, availability, affordability, appropriateness) and population abilities (to perceive, seek, reach, pay, and engage). The framework is adapted to foreground mental health care trajectories and the role of stigma, cultural adaptation, and trust in shaping access.
Results: Data collection is currently underway, with an aim for completion by March 2026. Findings will likely illustrate unique access barriers to mental health services faced by the LGBTQI+ community in Ireland. The qualitative data will provide an in-depth case study of their experiences of accessing mental healthcare, while the quantitative data will illustrate generaliseable access barriers as well as related solutions. The expert interviews will highlight current shortcomings and good practices that might be transferrable to other settings.
Discussion: By applying the Levesque framework to LGBTQI+ mental health, this paper offers a novel analytical lens that moves beyond utilisation or outcomes alone, highlighting how discrimination operates across both service structures and user capabilities. The Irish findings will likely inform recommendations for more equitable, LGBTQI+-affirmative, and accessible mental health systems.

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Conference Venue

The conference will take place at the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf in building N55 “Campus Lehre” (Martinistr. 52, 20246 Hamburg).

