EUROPEAN MENTAL HEALTH CITIES NETWORK (EMHCN)

RULES OF PROCEDURE

PREAMBLE

These Operating Rules set out the internal organisation, functioning, and governance framework of the **European Mental Health Cities Network (EMHCN),** in accordance with the **Charter of Principles** and the **Memorandum of Understanding** endorsed by its member cities and municipalities.

The EMHCN is established as a collaborative, inter-municipal platform of a non-binding nature, with a strategic and ethical character, aimed at strengthening local public mental health policies across Europe.

CHAPTER I

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1

Name and Legal Nature

1. The official name of the network is the **European Mental Health Cities Network (EMHCN).**
2. The EMHCN is a voluntary intermunicipal cooperation structure, non-governmental and non-profit in nature.
3. Its operation is governed by these Rules of Procedure, the Charter of Principles, the Memorandum of Understanding, and any internal regulations approved by the General Assembly.

Article 2

Purpose and Mission

1. The EMHCN's mission is to promote sustainable, integrated, and evidence-based municipal policies in the field of mental health.

2. The network aims to strengthen collaboration between European cities, the development of joint projects, technical capacity-building, and strategic representation at European and international levels.

Article 3

Guiding Principles

The EMHCN shall be guided by the following principles:

a) Human dignity and fundamental rights;

b) Solidarity-based intermunicipal cooperation;

c) Inclusive and democratic participation;

d) Territorial and social equity;

e) Science, innovation, and continuous improvement;

f) Transparency and public accountability.

CHAPTER II

MEMBERSHIP

Article 4

Full Members

1. Only cities and municipalities located in European countries are eligible.
2. Membership is formalised through the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding and the explicit acceptance of the Charter of Principles.

Article 5

Rights of Members

Members of the EMHCN shall have the right to:

a) Participate with voice and vote in the General Assembly;

b) Propose projects, initiatives, and amendments to regulations;

c) Serve on the Executive Secretariat and in Working Groups;

d) Use the network's shared resources and communication platforms.

Article 6

Duties of Members

Members of the EMHCN shall be responsible for:

a) Appointing an official representative to the network;

b) Actively participating in network activities;

c) Implementing local policies aligned with the network's principles;

d) Contributing to the network's monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

CHAPTER III

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Article 7

General Assembly

1. The General Assembly is the supreme decision-making body of the network.
2. It is responsible for:

   a) Approving the annual work plan and activity report;

   b) Electing the Executive Secretariat;

   c) Approving the Operating Rules and any revisions thereto;

   d) Deliberating on the admission of new members.

3. It shall meet in ordinary session once per year, **in person**, and in extraordinary session as necessary, preferably **online**.
4. The venue for the annual in-person meeting of the General Assembly shall be proposed by the Executive Secretariat and approved by the Assembly itself, preferably on a rotating basis among member municipalities, in order to reflect territorial diversity and encourage active participation from different regions.

Article 8

Executive Secretariat

1. The Executive Secretariat is the network's operational management body, serving a **two-year term**.
2. It is composed of **three cities/municipalities** elected by the General Assembly.
3. Its responsibilities include:

   a) Represent the network institutionally;

   b) Coordinate and implement projects;

   c) Prepare working documents and reports;

   d) Oversee institutional communication.

4. Each mandate is renewable **once only**.

Article 9

Advisory Council

1. The Advisory Council shall be established by resolution of the General Assembly, based on either direct invitation or an open application process organised by the Executive Secretariat. Its composition must ensure sectoral, geographical, and diversity representation.
2. It includes representatives from universities, research centres, professional organisations, civil society entities, and individuals with lived experience.
3. Its responsibilities include:

   a) Provide strategic advice;

   b) Validate best practices and policy recommendations;

   c) Support evaluation and impact assessment.

Article 10

Thematic Working Groups

1. Working Groups are flexible operational units focusing on priority areas (e.g., child and adolescent mental health, ageing, workplace mental health, migration, digital health).

2. Any city, municipality, or member of the Advisory Council may join a Working Group.
3. Working Groups shall produce reports, policy recommendations, and proposals to be submitted to the Executive Secretariat or General Assembly.

CHAPTER IV

OPERATION AND PARTICIPATION

Article 11

Meetings and Resolutions

1. General Assembly meetings shall be convened at least **30 days in advance**, with a detailed agenda.
2. Decisions shall be made by **simple majority of those present**.
3. In the event of a tie, the city/municipality presiding over the Executive Secretariat shall have the **casting vote**.

Article 12

Digital Participation

1. Online meetings and resolutions are permitted, with full institutional validity.
2. The network's digital channels must ensure equitable participation and formal recording of proceedings.
3. In-person General Assembly meetings may include remote online participation, provided it is duly justified and authorised by the Executive Secretariat, with full rights to speak and vote.
4. The technical management of the digital platforms used shall be the responsibility of the Executive Secretariat, which may draw on shared technical support from member cities and municipalities.

5. Costs associated with digital participation shall be borne by the network within its annual budget, prioritising accessible, secure, and sustainable technological solutions.

Article 13
Funding

1. The network may access European, international, or national funds through applications coordinated by the Executive Secretariat, with the support of interested cities and municipalities.
2. Member cities and municipalities may propose voluntary contributions, monetary or in-kind, to support specific activities or projects.
3. There are no membership fees or mandatory quotas; however, a quota for fixed costs may be established upon proposal by the Executive Secretariat at the first General Assembly, subject to approval by the majority of members.
4. The network's sustainability shall be promoted through external funding, strategic partnerships, and voluntary contributions, in addition to the potential implementation of the quota defined in the preceding point, under a cooperative model.

CHAPTER V
MONITORING, EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT

Article 14
Evaluation System

1. The EMHCN shall implement a continuous monitoring and evaluation system based on:

   a) Shared indicators (both qualitative and quantitative);

   b) Annual progress reports;

   c) Participatory assessments by members.

2. The Advisory Council may propose additional mechanisms for external, scientific, or ethical auditing.

CHAPTER VI

FINAL PROVISIONS

Article 15

Amendments to the Rules

These Rules of Procedure may be amended upon proposal by any member and require approval by the General Assembly with a **two-thirds majority** of votes cast.

Article 16

Unforeseen Situations

Any matters not covered herein shall be resolved in accordance with the principles of the Charter of Principles and, subsidiarily, with the general principles of European public and administrative law.

Article 17

Entry into Force

These Rules of Procedure shall enter into force upon approval by the General Assembly and publication via the network's official communication channels.

Promoting City,

/ Mário Constantino Lopes/

Mayor of Barcelos

Member City,

/ Maria del Carmen Morales Ferrando /

Alcaldesa

Beniel