Mental wellbeing: A call to action

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In our parallel session on **"Promoting health universities for healthy academics"**, we aimed to use our collective intelligence and expertise to envisage a university where *mental* health abounds and creative thinking and research can flourish. We started off with referring to a recent study which indicates that early career academics "are more than six times as likely to experience depression and anxiety as compared to the general population" (Evans et al., 2018, p. 282).

We aimed for a focused session in which participants could take the time to discuss potential issues and develop action plans to address those issues. To that end, we first invited participants to **name issues related to the mental health crisis in academia**. After that, we asked them to select one topic that they would focus on with at least two others for an hour. The first half hour could then be dedicated to further exploring the topic and identifying the core problems regarding their issue, and the second half hour to come up with actionable suggestions to address those problems.

We expected around ten issues to be raised, but the participants kept on naming issues, so at 23 we decided to cap it. The participants then indicated their preferred topic, which led to five groups that each focused on one of the following issues: **lack of action/learned helplessness**, **psychological safety**, **imposter syndrome**, **competition**, and **lack of transparency**.

We asked the groups to **develop action plans** at the individual level as well as at the collective level. We emphasized the importance of the collective level, given that academia tends to suggest that academics are individually responsible for their wellbeing, whereas many problems are in fact systemic and therefore **should be addressed collectively** (see Haslam & Reicher, 2012).

Each group wrote the core problems that they identified regarding their issues down in a separate tab of an online **spreadsheet**. The spreadsheet also contains an overview of all the action plans that were developed at the individual as well as the collective level. As such, the spreadsheet provides **an overview of suggested/best practices** that individual researchers as well as collectives (such as FoWOP) can use **to improve mental health in academia**.

Given that only 5 out of the 23 topics were covered, we would also like to extend a **call to action** to everyone who reads this: please take some time to help filling in the spreadsheet regarding the issues that you are knowledgeable about and/or have experience with. That way the spreadsheet can function as **a resource for any academic interested in improving mental wellbeing in academia**.

In a following blog post we will highlight some of the proposed actions envisaged to tackle pressing issues.