

WORLD LEADERSHIP DIALOGUE — WCPH 2026, Cape Town

Monday 7 September | 10:30 | MEETING ROOM 1.41 + 1.4

Promoting Mental Well-Being in Academia: Evidence, Tools and Action Plans

Universities are increasingly challenged by a growing mental health burden affecting students, early-career researchers, and academic staff. Beyond individual consequences, poor mental well-being threatens learning outcomes, academic performance, workforce retention, and the future capacity of public health systems worldwide. To illustrate how higher education institutions can respond to this growing challenge, the session will present [Health Mode On](#), a multi-institutional initiative coordinated by the University of Pavia and funded through by Italy's Ministry of University and Research to promote mental well-being across higher education institutions. Bringing together universities, advanced studies institution, and music conservatories, the initiative provides a unique opportunity to explore how well-being can be promoted across diverse educational settings. Findings from the nationwide multicenter assessment of mental health among Italian university students, based on the WHO World Mental Health International College Student (WMH-ICS) Initiative and involving over 10,000 students will be presented for the first time at the global public health community.

Through an exchange of experiences and viewpoints from different professional, institutional, and geographical contexts, the session will then examine the role of universities in promoting healthier learning environments, and the opportunities for translating evidence into sustainable and scalable action. Particular attention will be given to institutional culture, equity and inclusion, resilience, and the preparation of a future public health workforce capable of thriving in an increasingly complex world. Through a dialogue among academic and public health leaders from different parts of the world, participants will be encouraged to reflect on priorities, challenges, and solutions for creating healthier and more supportive university environments.

Speakers

Prof. Anna Odone, Project *Health Mode On* Principal Investigator, University of Pavia

Prof. Cesare Zizza, Prof. Serena Lecce: Pro-Rectorate for People and the Right to Study, University of Pavia

Dr. Laura Magaña, Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH)

Prof. Margaret Kaseje, Association of Schools of Public Health in Africa (ASPHA)

Dr. Paola Bertuccio, Dr. Giansanto Mosconi, Dr. Chiara Barbati, Dr. Riccardo Vecchio, Dr. Luca Viviani: Health Mode On Investigators, University of Pavia