

We, the Student Network of the Association of Nordic Engineers (ANE), express our deepest concerns regarding the dire state of Nordic students' mental health. We implore politicians and universities alike to investigate the root causes of the poor mental health prevalent among youth and to implement appropriate changes to ensure their well-being. We demand politicians both in the region and at the EU level deliver on the promises that are being voiced during the European Week of Mental Health.

Mental health problems plaguing the everyday are very prevalent amongst many students in the Nordic countries, especially among many engineering students. Studies show that the number of Norwegian students that report mental health issues has doubled since 2010. The number of Finnish students concerned with the state of their mental health rose to over 50% during the COVID-19 crisis. In Denmark, a recent national study found that 52.3% of young women and 31.2% of young men often experience severe stress symptoms - the latter exemplifying that combatting the well-being crisis is also a vital step in reducing inequality between the sexes.

If you ask almost any student what they feel causes poor mental health, they are likely to list a combination of various internal and societal expectations for oneself in combination with an extensive study-/ workload. In other words: The pressure is experienced from within. However, when mental health issues are as widespread as they are today it is evident that the issues lie not with the individual, but the society and environment they inhabit. Thus, we must do away with the way of thinking that causes individuals to internalize their mental problems and have the courage to implement structural changes in our universities and societies at large. Otherwise, we are at great risk of creating a generation of young engineers that are already burned out when they enter the labour market.

It is often said that we as engineering students are paramount in creating solutions for the world of tomorrow. If that is to be true, it is of utmost importance that we ensure the well-being of all groups of students. It is with engineering as it is with everything else. Diverse groups are not just better at solving diverse challenges - they are vital if we want to spot the challenges to solve in the first place. Thus, universities must create an environment that fosters personal connections and a sense of belonging for all students, irrespective of their identity. Women, members of the LGBTQIA+ community and international students are all more likely to be affected by issues related to mental health, and therefore we call for a specific focus on these groups, and we find it vital to call for proper representation in the development of reform strategies. If reforms are to tackle the issues of the young, the young should be included at all levels of decision-making.

Now is not the time for political slogans. Now is the time for action. From politicians and decision-makers at all levels. The mental health of the young is steadily declining, and this trend will undoubtedly not turn around unless we act now. We demand that politicians create the right conditions for young people to thrive and expand the discussion of mental distress across national borders.

Our well-being today is insurance for your well-being tomorrow.