

## Press release

### Silence about mental health issues costs companies billions

#### Swiss CEOs call for putting mental health on the table



**Mental health challenges are taking an increasing toll on the Swiss workforce — with serious consequences for both economy and performance. In a new video initiative titled “*The Cost of Silence*,” eleven bold CEOs from leading Swiss companies break their silence.**

May 12th, 2025 – For Mental Health Awareness Month, the initiative “The Cost of Silence” brought together eleven CEOs from across Switzerland. They were invited without knowing the concept — or the questions. Each question was based on real experiences from the workplace — like taking a nap in an office restroom out of exhaustion. Out of more than 100 approached CEOs, 11 accepted and opened up. Their unfiltered response: the pressure is real – and it is everywhere.

Every 35 seconds, someone in Switzerland takes sick leave due to mental health challenges. Every 90 seconds, someone reaches the point of burnout<sup>1</sup>. While awareness is increasing, mental health is still often treated as taboo subjects particularly at work. The economic consequences are devastating: according to estimates, the loss of productivity due to mental

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<sup>1</sup> These numbers are based on the following: Work force in Switzerland: 5,327,000 people (Source: Federal Statistical Office); of those, 17% were on sick leave due to mental health reasons and 7% had a burnout (Source: AXA Mind Health Report 2024)

illness costs Switzerland CHF 17.3 billion annually<sup>2</sup>—that is around 2 percent of Swiss GDP<sup>3</sup>. This is bad news at a time when international competitiveness requires resilience and peak performance.

“Managing mental health is business strategy,” says Nathalie Agosti, one of the campaign’s creators. “This communication initiative aims to break the taboo among Switzerland’s committed workforce and position mental health as a vital performance driver to make Switzerland fit for the future.”

The pressure is particularly intense at C-level: more than one in three executives is operating in survival mode due to excessive stress. Claire Garwacki, co-initiator of the campaign, observes this on a daily basis: “At every meeting, one to two-thirds of the participants are too exhausted to be fully present and perform<sup>4</sup>. This is a huge productivity killer – and it's high time we talked about it.”

### **Companies are part of the solution**

Effective solutions go beyond individual strategies for strengthening resilience and mental well-being. When companies establish mental health guidelines, the proportion of employees with mental health issues is reduced by half (from 16 percent to 8 percent)<sup>5</sup>.

“Neglecting mental health costs us more than we want to admit. But if companies focus on empathy, raise awareness, and create a proactive culture, mental health can become an important driver of returns, explains Patricia Mattle, CEO of Elipslife. According to a Gallup survey<sup>6</sup>, companies with high employee engagement outperform those with low engagement by 147 percent in terms of earnings per share.

So we need leaders who set an example and create an environment in which people can stay healthy: “Companies that make room for mental health and promote an open culture have been shown to benefit from fewer sick days, greater motivation, stronger teams, and more sustainable productivity,” says Muriel Langenberger, Managing Director at Pro Mente Sana, a Swiss foundation that has been working for decades to remove the stigma surrounding mental illness. “Mental health is not a luxury – it is a prerequisite for functioning together, both in society and in business.” Those who recognize this and act now will secure a decisive competitive advantage.

### **About the campaign**

The video “the Cost of Silence” was launched by Nathalie Agosti, founder of Outlive Advisory, and Claire Garwacki, founder of Bellevue Executive Search, who caused a stir in 2024 with

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<sup>2</sup> AXA, “Mentale Gesundheit: Schlechte Noten für Arbeitgeber”

<sup>3</sup> Basis for calculation: GDP 2023: 803.6 billion. Source: Federal Statistical Office

<sup>4</sup> Susan Goldworthy, „The leadership burnout crisis”

<sup>5</sup> AXA, Mind Health Report 2025

<sup>6</sup> Gallup Business Journal, “How Employee Engagement Drives Growth”

their “In Her Chair” initiative. Eleven CEOs from the Swiss business world are surprised on camera with real facts and anecdotes about mental health at work. The aim of the campaign is to break the taboo surrounding mental health and raise awareness that good mental health is an important performance driver.

Video Link: [The cost of silence \(E\)](#)

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The following CEOs participated in the campaign:

- Nora Teuwsen, ABB Switzerland
- Denis Machuel, Adecco Group
- Florian Saur, AstraZeneca Switzerland
- Patricia Mattle, Elipslife
- Marc Werner, Galenica Group
- Felix Graf, NZZ Group
- Billy Kneubühl, Oracle Switzerland
- Muriel Langenberger, Pro Mente Sana
- Achim von Leoprechting, Tecan Group
- Tina Müller, Weleda
- Peter Spirig, previously V-ZUG

**Further facts**

- Only 11 percent of people in Switzerland consider their mental well-being to be good.
- One in four Swiss adults lives with a mental illness.
- In 2022, mental illness-related absences from work rose by 20 percent.

#### About Nathalie Agosti

Nathalie Agosti is the Founder and Managing Director of [Outlive Advisory](#), a Swiss-based Advisory helping companies *outlive* the competition through pragmatic sustainability strategies and impactful communication. With a background in international business, communication, and psychology, she combines strategic thinking with a deep understanding of leadership and human behavior.

With over a decade of experience in corporate environments and global brands, Agosti brings extensive firsthand knowledge of what drives performance, including the direct impact of mental well-being on engagement and delivery. As part of her work, she helps companies address such challenges through responsible strategy and communication.

In 2024, she initiated the [In Her Chair](#) campaign, which explored gender bias in business.

#### About Claire Garwacki:

Claire Garwacki is the founder of [Bellevue Executive Search](#), a Swiss-based executive recruiting firm specializing in hiring CFOs and their finance teams. Over the past 10 years, she has held more than 2,500 interviews and spoken with business leaders from companies of all sizes and industries in Switzerland. These experiences have given Garwacki a practical view of leadership challenges, especially around mental health, a topic that comes up in most interviews and client meetings.

In 2024, she initiated the [In Her Chair](#) campaign, which explored gender bias in business.

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