

MENTAL HEALTH IN YOUTH AND EDUCATION EXPERT MEETING

Luxemburg, February 27th 2008

Minutes prepared by the Technical Consortium contracted to coordinate the Consensus Papers on Mental Health and the consultative process for the European Commission, DG SANCO.

Meeting Organisation:

Four thematic meetings (prevention of depression and suicide; mental health in youth and education; mental health in workplace settings; and mental health in older people) were convened by the European Commission during 26th-29th February.

The meetings were chaired by Jürgen Schefflein, policy officer in charge Mental Health, at DG Sanco, European Commission.

Technical coordination was supplied by a contracted consortium led by Dr Eva Jané-Llopis at the Department of Health of the Government of Catalonia (Gencat), and including Prof Kristian Wahlbeck at STAKES in Finland (coordinator of suicide), David McDaid at the London School of Economics (coordinator of workplace), and Dr Allyson McCollam and Chris O'Sullivan at the Scottish Development Centre in the UK.

The Public Health Executive Agency (PHEA) was responsible for the meeting logistical organisation.

A) From the Green Paper to the Mental Health Pact

Presentation by Jürgen Schefflein, DG SANCO, European Commission

Following up on the consultation on the Commission's Green Paper on Mental Health, a decision was taken by the Commission not to develop a formal communication on mental health, but to take a more action-oriented approach in order to support action on mental health in the EU. The process will be developed around the 4 priority areas, Prevention of Depression and Suicide; Youth, Education and Mental Health; Mental Health in Workplace Settings; and Mental Health and Older People, and will stress the work across boundaries and sectors. Priority will also be given to aspects of combating social exclusion and stigma. (See PowerPoint presentation 1 by Jürgen Schefflein).

A High-Level Conference on Mental Health will take place on 13th June 2008 as a pragmatic and visible way to tackle priority areas in mental health. The conference is led by Commissioner for Health Ms Vassiliou. Commission President Barroso will participate in the event. Commissioner Figel, for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, and Commissioner Špidla, for Employment, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities are supporting the event. Ministers of Health and Ministers from other sectors (e.g. Education) across EU Member States are expected to participate. The final aim of the Conference is to establish a European Pact on Mental Health, to encourage Member State Governments and stakeholders from key sectors to invest in mental health as a common interest and responsibility, and to engage into a follow-up long-term process of exchange and cooperation.

It is expected that the conference will be followed-up during 2009-2010, possibly by the preparation of a Commission proposal for a European Council Recommendation, and by the organisation of thematic meetings, in each of the priority areas, for the development of action.

B) The role of the consensus paper, proposed structure and preparation

Presentations and explanations by Jürgen Schefflein and Eva Jané-Llopis:

Preparation for the Conference will include the writing of a 5-10 page "Consensus Paper" in each of the 4 priority areas. These papers will be distributed at the Conference and should reflect the way action on mental health can contribute to mutual objectives across sectors and how the implementation of agreed policy objectives can be strengthened. The papers will focus on highlighting opportunities for evidence-based action, as demonstrated by research and practice.

The aim of the expert meetings was to discuss the content of each paper, and specifically to:

- Gain a common perspective
- Identify and state the facts and arguments in each area
- Take stock, map existing knowledge and initiatives (policies and programmes)
- Identify gaps where action or information are still needed
- Identify materials for papers
- Engage major players - intersectorally

The structure of the papers will be the same for all 4 strands, and as follows:

- Identification of policy context and objectives
- Description of the current situation and, where possible, trends
- A framework for action (including areas of):
Promotion of mental health, Prevention of mental disorders, Support to people with mental health problems, Improvement of the knowledge base
- Approaches for implementation

The proposed process, timeline and milestones for the preparation of the consensus papers are:

- 30th March: Draft 1 - Developed by the coordinator (David Mc Daid) and core drafting group
- 15th April: Comments on 1st draft back from thematic group/EC
- 30th April: Draft 2: circulated to broader group of stakeholders, MS and experts
- 15th May: Comments on 2nd draft back from broader group
- 30th May: Draft 3: Before the conference
- 12th June: Pre-Conference
- 13th June: High-level conference

A technical longer annex to the Consensus Papers will also be developed, including supporting evidence and examples. The consensus papers will have clearly stated authorship and endorsement of those taking part in this process. (See PowerPoint presentation 2 by Eva Jané-Llopis)

C) General Issues for the thematic consensus paper Mental Health in Youth and Education

Presentations by Eva Jané-Llopis (Group coordinator), Trude Eliassen (DG Employment) and discussion

- Background in Youth and Education:
Despite recent mandates in the youth mental health field in the EU, such as European Youth Pact, Schools for the 21st century, Together for Health and the European Reference Framework on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, there is still much room for improvement. Initiatives to improve MH in schools and reduce the number of early school leavers can be seen to be particularly cost effective strategies later in life, and parenting also has an important impact on mental health. (See power point presentation 3 by Eva Jané-Llopis)
- New title for the priority area:
Because the school dimension has the highest visibility within this priority area, but the impact on and of mental health are also outside school and across the lifespan, a new more complete title is proposed by the Commission: "Healthy Children And Young People: Laying The Foundation For Lifelong Wellbeing".
- Intersectoral collaboration from the Commission:
 - DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities is interested in participating in the high-level conference and supports the Mental Health Pact. Specifically, their interest is in promoting social inclusion and service access of children living in poverty. Key documents have already been developed in this area (See power point presentation 4 by Trude Eliassen)
 - DG Education is directly involved in the process and the Commissioner has expressed his interest in collaborating in the preparations of the High Level Conference.
 - DG Research is also involved and has been responsible for providing much of the knowledge developed in this field.
 - DG Justice has participated in an inter-service group and is reflecting how best to contribute to the process.

Discussion:

- Social inclusion perspective:
Social inclusion perspective should be clearly stated, addressing the connection between schools, families and community in order to take a holistic perspective.
- Barriers to the work across sectors:
Collaboration between education and health sector should be strengthened, with suggestions made for overcoming barriers. Progress in this area must be highlighted and mental health promotion described as a facilitator to learning and to increasing school outcomes, instead of an extra chore for school personnel.

- Declaration of Children's Rights:
A mention of the Children's rights Declaration should be made as this is not properly respected in some countries. Main results of ESHA survey (European School Heads Association), due in May, could be incorporated into the process.
- Role of NGOs:
NGOs position papers can be a valuable resource for further information. NGOs can also have an important role in the dissemination of the process.
- Evaluation of the whole process:
The evaluation of the impact of the process should be considered. The selection of a good indicator reflecting changes in objectives and achievements would be helpful for that purpose.

D) Specific suggestions for the consensus paper on mental health, youth and education: discussion

Preliminary ideas to be included and further developed for the consensus paper on Mental Health in Youth and Education:

1. Identification of policy context

- European Youth Pact
- Declaration of Children's Rights
- Health white paper
- Benchmarks for education and training
- Resolution on environment and child health
- Lifelong learning
- Lisbon Agenda and follow up
- Call for action: education, health and development (WHO June 2007 – technical committee of school health)

2. Description of the current situation and trends. Indicators:

- Prevalence of disorders, including European survey on alcohol and drug use and suicide.
- CHILD, EU indicators for health
- Positive indicators of assets: Well-being, Optimism
- Quality of life
- Chronically ill, handicapped or mentally impaired
- Early school leavers
- Truancy
- Bullying
- Delinquency (judiciary systems)
- Parents' background
- Children of mentally ill and Young carers
- Unemployment: 16-25 and family unemployment
- Environments and community

3. A framework for action

3.1. Promotion of good mental well-being

- School MHP: Whole school approach and Health Promoting Schools
- Non-formal education
- Community approach
- Peer group experience
- Partnership initiatives: linking school community and family
- Parent networks - Parent and family training in educational skills
- Mentorship and street workers
- Media

3.2 Prevention of mental disorders

- Depression prevention for children of mentally ill parents
- Behavioural problems prevention
- Support transitions and crisis situations
- Socio-emotional skills learning
- Peer mediation
- Empowerment of schools (and education of teachers)
- Awareness raising programmes
- Telephone help lines for young people

- Children's ombudsman
- Parenting support networks
- Use of the internet
- Physical activity
- Links between different sectors in dealing with young people
- Round tables with parents, teachers, young persons and experts (e.g., on violence)

Identification of risk factors

- Self-esteem and autonomy, Detection of early signs, Children from difficult backgrounds, influence of parental and social expectations, Migrants

3.3 Support to people experiencing mental disorders

- Stigma
- Counselling and early treatment in schools
- Counselling for families, positive response to behavioural problems

3.4 Improving the knowledge base

- MH disorders prevalence and country comparisons across EU
- Cross-cultural European child MH indicators
- Spending per child on mental health
- Quality of services and continuity
- Teachers' behaviour
- Access to and dissemination of the knowledge base
- Importance to connect existing information from projects (e.g., SUPPORT project)

4. Approaches for implementation

- Dialogue between sectors at different levels
 - Involvement of youth organisations and welfare systems
 - Involvement of children in finding solutions
- Reach groups at risk (e.g., Sweden – TV programme for problematic students).
- Capacity building
- Comprehensive school strategies
 - EPA teachers and parents partnership training
 - Strong parents strong children, mediators project, mentoring transition to work
 - Broad schools – after school clubs for activities

E) Next steps- Action expected from the thematic group

Calendar of actions for the following weeks:

- March 10th - 15th the group will receive:
 - Meeting notes and presentations
 - **Request** for key papers and data sources relating to the topic
 - **Request** for key people and organizations to inform/involve in the process via email
 - **Request** to update their contact details from circulated participants list
- March 30th: Draft 1 distributed to thematic group
- April 1st – 15th: Thematic Group provides **comments on 1st draft**
- April 30th: Draft 2 distributed to broader group of stakeholders and experts
- May 1st –15th: Thematic Group, broader stakeholder group and Member States provide comments to 2nd Draft

We would appreciate if you could please send any additional information for the preparation of the Consensus Paper to: EC-MentalHealthProcess@gencat.cat