

Mental Health Briefing Sheets

Facts and Activities in Member States

FINLAND

Situation on Mental Health

Suicide: The suicide mortality is above the EU average and among the five highest in the EU27¹.

Mental disorders/depression: Mental health problems and substance abuse are among the most serious threats for public health in Finland. About one quarter of Finnish people suffer from psychological symptoms with adverse effects at some time in their lives. It is estimated that 7% of all Finnish adults suffer from depressive, anxiety and alcohol-related disorders².

Older People's Mental Health: In 2005 6,5% of men and 13,2% of women aged 65 and over were currently depressed³.

Children's Mental Health: Bullying is a major threat for mental wellbeing in children and youth. In 2000 about one fourth of 13 year-old boys and girls reported being bullied at least once during the previous months⁴. In 2005 12 % of students in 8th or 9th grade in school had moderate or serious depression⁵.

Other: In 2007 mental health problems was the leading cause for disability pensions⁶.

Policy Context

During the last decades the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has organized several national programmes, for example, the Suicide Prevention Programme, the Schizophrenia Programme, the National Depression Programme, Meaningful Life, and Mental Health in Primary Services. As a result of these processes, there has been a movement:

- from a sickness approach towards a health approach;
- from task and worker centred orientation towards a client and family centred orientation;
- from institutional care towards community care; and,
- from special themes towards broad, regional and holistic approaches.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has recently launched a strategy for social protection 2015 that, among others, aims to improve mental health. Further, the Ministry has appointed a working group to prepare a new national mental health and substance abuse policy programme. For the first time these two issues are discussed in the same programme, which is expected to be finished in 2009.

Examples of activities on priority areas:

Prevention of suicide and depression

Finland has a long tradition in suicide prevention though suicide rates are still relatively high. The First national suicide prevention project/program was launched in 1986 and

¹ Eurostat

² Stakes: Atlas of Mental Health - Statistics from Finland

³ National Public Health Institute

⁴ HBSC

⁵ Stakes: National School Health Survey 2007

⁶ The Finnish Centre for Pensions

since then suicide prevention has been under development. Between the years 1990 to 2005 suicide rates have decreased by 40 per cent.

Mental Health in Youth and education

YHTEISPELI (meaning 'playing and working together') is a national project aiming to promote children's socio-emotional development in kindergarten and in elementary school. Tools and practices for teachers and other school personnel are being developed to enable schools to promote children's psychological development more systematically and efficiently.

The Effective Family project aims to develop working methods that can provide support to families and children and prevent mental disorders in children when a parent has mental health problems or a severe illness. The project aims to strengthen the preventive approach and build up co-operation between services for adults and services for children.

Mental health at the workplace

The new initiative of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, called the MASTO Project aims to improve mental health in the working-age population and reduce depression-related disability.

Towards Successful Seniority is a research project aiming to investigate the positive effects of the developed group method for promoting career management and preventing burnout in work organizations. In addition the project aims to disseminate the results of the study and the published method to the Finnish working life as a whole.

Mental Health in Older People

Vetoapu (meaning 'encouragement and support') project aims to support mental wellbeing of older people in transition phase from working life to retirement. The most important dimensions of the project are prevention of loneliness, depression, suicides, alcohol and substance use, and promotion of social relationships and meaningful activities in everyday life.

Combating stigma and social exclusion

Time Out! Getting Life Back on Track is a research and development project that aims to develop a psycho-social support programme for preventing the process of exclusion among young men. The purpose of the project is to develop the content of support interventions, draw up models for service organisation and to examine the impact of support interventions. The target group are men who are exempted from military service or those who interrupt military or civilian service.⁷

⁷ Sources of information for the production of this briefing sheet:

Healthy Children and Young People: Laying the Foundation for Lifelong Wellbeing. Consensus paper (2008).

Mental Health and the Workplace. Consensus paper (2008)

Mental Health in Older People. Consensus paper (2008)

Prevention of Depression and Suicide. Consensus paper (2008)

Contributions from Member States - 2008, available at: <http://www.ec-mental-health-process.net/>

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

European Commission (2008) Child Poverty and Well-being in the EU - Current Status and Way Forward

McCollam et al., (2008). Mental Health in the EU - Key facts, figures and activities. A background paper.

Jané-Llopis & Anderson (2006). "Mental health promotion and mental disorder prevention across European Member States: a collection of country stories" (2nd edition), Luxembourg: European Communities