The role of new media technologies and the internet

Key messages:

- New media technologies are central in young people's lives: increasingly interact, play and learn through new media

- Inequalities in access to and use of ICT across Europe: digital divide depends on region, socio-economic class and gender

- Internet and other media can be valuable resources to promote mental health and wellbeing: internet enables autonomous conversation, learning and play which appeal to children

- ICT hold potential threats to children's mental health: risk of excessive use, exposure to inappropriate content and misleading information

- Empowerment through digital media literacy as the solution: empower children and young people but also teachers and parents

Activities presented

1. **<u>Germany example</u>**

- Problem of internet and videogame addiction - not covered by health system. Government political response to the problem:

- debate on diagnosis, symptoms, statistics, prevention, counselling and therapy

- support inclusion of ICT and videogame addiction in the ICD, support research, provide more information, joint work with federal states

Activities presented

2. Safer internet programme

- European Commission (DG INFSO) initiative to address:
- Threats and risks of internet re mental health (abuse, addiction, bullyism...)
- Intersectoral collaboration: with local authorities, police, NGOs
- Raising awareness and campaign activities
- Empowerment and training to provide appropriate knowledge and tools to use new technologies

Activities presented

3. Re-thinking service provision

- Collaboration between internet industry and key stakeholders
- Importance of putting services available online: organisations are often reluctant, but youth search for information / help on the internet
- support organisations to do mental health promotion through internet by guarantying safety, confidentiality, accessibility, interaction

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Activities presented

4. Self-Harm: Recovery advice and Support online

- creating online community for people interested in mental health / concerned by self-harm

- providing support online through complementary expertise, raising awareness, provision of updated information, interactive resources, peer to peer and group support

- respect of confidentiality

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Activities presented

5. Swedish Inheritance Fund

- Importance of working with community
- Funding initiatives for children, young people and people with disability
- NGOs involvement in mental health promotion and prevention of disorders through internet: online support, exchange of views and info
- Youth often prefer internet to face-to-face interaction – responses might be brief but must be meangiful

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Activities presented

6. Youth view

- Lack of support, training and education on the use and harms of internet
- Risks from exposure and easy access to online material
- Important role of schools to educate and provide appropriate tools and contents
- Feeling lonely and isolated despite all...
- Internet can be used positively and give great help: need to establish online support and provide reliable information

Action priorities

- *Action 1:* Establishment of **advisory mechanisms** to support policy and facilitate collaboration and network activities between researchers, educational and policy actors on mental health and new media

- *Action 2:* Engagement in **partnerships** with the ICT and media industries on mental health opportunities and risks, including marketing and economic arguments.

- *Action 3:* Appointment of **youth ambassadors** to empower and involve youth and to reinforce peer learning re to new media technology in the promotion of mental health and wellbeing.

Action priorities

- *Action 4:* **Awareness raising initiatives** such as public awareness campaigns, carried out through a variety of media and public schools

- **Action 5: Use new media actively** in the promotion of mental health, e.g. by government and (mental) health departments using web sites, social networking sites, blogs on youth mental health. Programs in national languages.

-   *Action 6:* Development of **age-appropriate e-mental health promotion sites or programmes,** including discussion sites and fora where young people can find reliable health information on risks to their mental health.

Action priorities

- *Action 7:* Initiatives, including **strengthening of regulatory or self-regulatory frameworks in Europe,** to prevent and report misleading info, to prevent harmful effects and to report inappropriate websites

- *Action 8:* **Research** on positive and negative health-related behaviour and effects of the use of media and internet and on groups at risk.

- *Action 9:* **Training and awareness raising among health professionals, teachers and professionals** in media and internet sectors on the mental health impact of new media/internet technologies and the tools available

- **Action 10: Training and education for youth ambassadors** to enable then to recognize risky media and ICT use, risky lifestyles and mental problems, initiate self-help groups, and to motivate other youth

The way forward: options and commitments for implementation

Some reactions...

- Topics not included: cyber-bullying, abuse or online pornography

- Issue of reliability of the website: need for a legal framework and guidance

- Developing guidelines and recommendations to support young people in using internet in a critical way