EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION
This report strongly advocates the need to shift the focus of mental health:

First, as a major contributor to health and well-being, mental health needs to be brought out from professional, organisational and political isolation into the broader sphere of public health.

Second, instead of concentrating on mental health at the level of individuals, we need to strengthen the population-level mental health approach. This is necessary to sharpen our insight into how we should integrate mental health in public health policies, strategies and programmes, and act across policies with an impact on mental health.

Third, we must shift the emphasis of our understanding of mental health, which traditionally has been associated with mental disorders. Instead of looking only at the negative side of mental health, contemporary thinking and actions must draw attention to positive mental health.

WHY SHOULD ACTION BE TAKEN?
Positive mental health is an important resource for individuals, families, communities and nations. It also enhances a person's capacity to contribute meaningfully to social networks, communities and societies. Mental health problems, in contrast, add significantly to general health expenditure and contribute to disability, mortality, loss of economic productivity, poverty and low quality of life. Thus, mental health has a conspicuous societal value in itself, and mental health problems impose a heavy burden not only on the individuals but on society as a whole.

There is mounting evidence of the availability of effective measures to promote mental health and to prevent mental ill-health, and yet, an efficient collaborative structure between the various organisations and networks currently active in the field is still lacking. It is, however, becoming increasingly obvious that transnational collaboration can help achieve mutual benefits between participants.

FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION
It is proposed that the main strategies of action on mental health should cover issues such as the development of general policies favourable for people's mental health, mental health impact assessment in societal planning and decision-making, promotion of mental health in all relevant settings, reduction of the risk factors of mental health problems, reduction of the stigma of mental ill-health, and protection
of the human rights and dignity of all citizens. In addition to these, the required actions include the delivery of appropriate services for early detection, care, treatment and rehabilitation, and for the prevention of mortality. These actions can be targeted at all levels - individuals, groups, communities and societies.

ELEMENTS OF ACTION

With regard to mental health, each Member State should draw up a strategic mental health policy that is well integrated with its overall health policies at national, regional and local levels. While each Member State has its own special needs, problems, resource constraints and challenges, all share some common areas that need to be addressed by national policy if effective use is to be made of the resources available to improve mental health.

Areas relevant to public health actions in mental health are:

- mental health in public policies (e.g. employment, education, housing, environment, equality);
- service components in health and social services (primary care, specialist services, social services, co-operation between services);
- supportive infrastructures (mental health monitoring, research and development, human resources, NGOs, service users and carers); and
- steering mechanisms (legislation, financing, exchange of information and dissemination of good practices).

CONCLUSION

Mental health is an indivisible part of public health. It is therefore of the utmost importance that mental health and its promotion should be integrated closely with all public health strategies. The value of mental health needs to be recognised throughout the European Union, and across all levels and all sectors of society. Only in this way can we ensure that we live in a caring world that understands the promotion of mental health as an explicit and implicit assumption of public and private life, and that is able to give people suffering from mental health problems the help and treatment they require to enable them to live a life of dignity in accordance with their basic human rights.
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