

## Mental Health Briefing Sheets

### Facts and Activities in Member States

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#### **DENMARK<sup>1</sup>**

##### Situation on Mental Health

**Suicide:** In 1980, the suicide rate in Denmark reached a level that was among the highest in the world, with 35 suicides per 100,000 inhabitants<sup>2</sup>. The suicide mortality has decreased since 1980, and in 2005 the rate (adjusted for age) was 12 per 100,000 inhabitants<sup>3</sup>. The suicide rate among men is about twice as high as among women.

**Mental disorders/depression:** The WHO has estimated that depressive disorders account for the greatest cause of disability adjusted life years (DALY's) in Denmark, amounting to over 8 % of all DALY's. In Denmark 200,000 adults are depressed. 50,000 suffer from a severe depression.

**Older people's mental health:** In older people the prevalence of depression is not higher compared to other groups but depression is typically more severe and is not treated in time. A great number of suicides by older people are due to untreated depression<sup>4</sup>.

**Children's mental health:** Children's poor social relations and bullying are a major threat for mental well-being in children and youth. In 2006, 10% of girls and 11% of boys at the age of 11 were bullied at least once or twice a month. Similarly, 9% of girls and boys at the age of 13; and 5% of girls - 6% of boys at the age of 15 also reported being bullied at least once or twice a month<sup>5</sup>.

##### Policy Context

During the last 15 years, there has been an increasing focus in Denmark on issues concerning mental disorders and its care. A policy to change the system of psychiatric care from the institutional care of earlier times to a community based service was established in the beginning of the 1990s, and is now implemented.

Over the years, there has been a growing political awareness of problems regarding mental disorders and mental health, as well as an increasing political will and commitment in regard to the need for improving mental health services. This has led to three consecutive 3-year national agreements between the government and the counties (who are responsible for health care services including mental health care). These agreements represent a nationwide strategy development and improvement of care and treatment offered to patients and persons suffering from mental disorders. The agreements also contain arrangements for the financing and regular evaluation of progress.

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<sup>1</sup> Revised and updated version by Member State

<sup>2</sup> Jané-Llopis & Anderson (Eds) (2006). Mental health promotion and mental disorder prevention across European Member States: a collection of country stories. Luxembourg: European Communities

<sup>3</sup> The National Board of Health in Denmark

<sup>4</sup> The National Board of Health in Denmark

<sup>5</sup> The State's Institute of Public Health

The Danish health policy “Healthy throughout Life” launched by the Danish Government in 2002, has the overall target of increasing life expectancy, improving the quality of life and reducing social inequality in the health of the Danish population. “Healthy throughout Life” maintains a special focus on collective efforts to reduce the major preventable diseases and disorders through primary prevention as well as support and rehabilitation in relation to patients<sup>6</sup>.

### Examples of activities on priority areas

#### **Prevention of suicide and depression**

The decreasing number of suicides over time has been explained by the following hypotheses: effects of reduced availability of means to commit suicide; better physical and psychiatric treatment after attempted suicide; increased social and cultural stability in society; more general focus on prevention; and increased access to telephone counselling and psychiatric emergency services.

#### **Mental health in youth and education**

The government has supported “PsykiatriFonden” (Psychiatric Fund)’s projects for children and youth. The aim of one of the projects is education and prevention of mental disorders through a countrywide educational contribution to schoolchildren. Since 2002 the project has visited more than 30,000 schoolchildren and their teachers. The aim of another of the projects led by “PsykiatriFonden” is to keep young people with mental disorders in school as well as preventing mental disorders developing etc.

#### **Mental health at the workplace**

A number of programmes address stress at work; senior policies at the work place as well as projects that focus on employing people in risk groups.

#### **Mental health in older people**

The government has established National Knowledge Centre for Dementia. One of the purposes of the Centre is to treat patients with dementia as well as educate patients in the early stages of dementia how to maintain basic cognitive skills etc.

#### **Combating stigma and social exclusion**

A policy to change the system of psychiatric care from the institutional care to a community based service had a special emphasis on people with mental disorders. The aim of the policy was to improve the social inclusion and the life satisfaction of people with psychological distress. The Danish government published a booklet in November 2005 on central values for intersectoral effort in caring for mentally ill patients. The purpose has been to create coherence between treatment and social assistance of the patients.

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<sup>6</sup> Jané-Llopis & Anderson (Eds) (2006). Mental health promotion and mental disorder prevention across European Member States: a collection of country stories. Luxembourg: European Communities