

Mental Health Briefing Sheets

Facts and Activities in Member States

SWEDEN

Situation on Mental Health

Suicide: Suicide rate in Sweden (12,4 per 100 000) is slightly above the EU27 average¹.

Mental disorders/depression: During the recent years there has been an increase in depression and anxiety in the Swedish population. The numbers of sick leave because of burnout syndromes and stress related depressive disorders have increased dramatically. In 2004 approximately every fourth of the women (24%) and every sixth (16%) of the men reported psychological distress².

Older People's Mental Health: In older people, especially in women, the prevalence of depression is high. In 2004, 42% of women and 19% of men aged 75 or older reported being depressed³.

Children's Mental Health: In 2000 about one fifth of the 13 year-old boys and girls reported being bullied at least once during the previous months⁴.

Policy Context

Sweden has a long tradition in preventive work. The most comprehensive prevention project in the field of mental health has been the developing of alcohol policy at the beginning of the 20th century. Mental ill health prevention is one priority area in the Swedish health care act. Prevention of mental disorders and promotion of mental health is mentioned in most key policy documents in the field of health. The idea is that prevention and promotion should be an integrated part of the work that is undertaken in the health care sector, in the schools and at the work places. At the county level almost all county councils have adopted health plans in which mental ill health is noted as one of the largest public health problems.

Examples of activities on priority areas:

Prevention of suicide and depression

The first national programme for suicide prevention was established in 1995 but it does not have any special funding from the government. In 2006 a proposal of a new national suicide prevention program was made to government with the aim to improve the efforts of people with suicidal tendencies, within the scope of improving prescribing of effective medicine and therapies and increasing research and evaluation work.

¹ Eurostat

² Swedish National Institute of Public Health

³ EU-SILC

⁴ HBSC

Mental health in youth and education

The government supports different NGOs from a public fund for projects to prevent mental ill health in children and adolescents. There are a number of programs in schools aimed to reduce bullying, alcohol and tobacco use and the adverse effects of sexual activity, unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

The system of youth health clinics is intended to support adolescents in developing and keeping good health. From Youth clinics adolescents get help without being registered. Originally youth clinics were directed towards the prevention of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, but are more frequently addressing emotional problems.

Mental health at the workplace

A number of programmes address stress at work in work places. Occupational health care services were reduced during the 1980s and there is now a growing awareness that occupational health care services must be developed again.

Mental Health in Older People

In order to stimulate self care, preventive health care and outreach activities such as preventive home visits, new state grants have been made available recent years. The Government has established Research and Development Centres focusing on dementia care.

Combating stigma and social exclusion

The psychiatric reform was established in the year 1995, and had a special emphasis on people with mental disorders. The aim of the reform was to improve the social inclusion and the life satisfaction of people with psychological distress.⁵

⁵ 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/>

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

Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

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