Our Comments for the Green Paper! Weil der Stadt, May 2006

We have the following propositions:

We think that the importance of mental health of children and adolescents is not sufficiently addressed. An early psychic stabilization and a timely treatment of psychological troubles in childhood and adolescence is a necessary prerequisite in order to enable adults to be self-dependent and self-responsible men and women and to minimize or avoid psychiatric and somatic disorders. The importance of early interventions cannot be overestimated! This is why support of the psychological wellbeing of children should be referred to, at a prominent place right in the introduction of the Greenbook, as a “future resource” for the health of all people (and all ages).

To further the psychic wellbeing of children and adolescents, we need intensified endeavour in the national health systems by all medical disciplines for children and adolescents, specialists in pediatrics, in child and adolescent psychiatry and psychotherapy and by the nonmedical specialists like child and adolescent psychotherapists. Especially for our field of CAP, the inauguration of university chairs, support of ongoing training and the enlargement of outpatient community services should be supported in all Europe.

We want direct special attention to the unique German model of outpatient social-psychotherapeutic practices to improve community care in form of the so called “Social Psychiatry Agreement” (Sozialpsychiatrie-Vereinbarung) with the primary health insurance companies and the substitute funds. With this model we are able to parallel the diagnostic and therapeutic potentialities of inpatient facilities with the help of a multiprofessional team of developmental therapists, social pedagogues, psychologists working in an integrative network. Thus, one physician can diagnose and treat three times as many patients with his team as a doctor in single practice.

This model offers enormous resources for mental health care! It also encompasses a collaborative interdisciplinary approach by contacts to other physicians, providers of nonmedical remedies, juvenile authorities, counselling agencies, kindergartens and schools,
thus enabling a stabilizing network especially for children and adolescents with complex disturbances and multiple risks (children of parents with psychiatric disorders, of chronically ill parents, socially disadvantaged families, immigrants). We’d be delighted if the model of social-psychiatric practices, unique in Europe, would be mentioned in the Greenbook.

It is further essential to stress the importance of prevention for the mental health of children and adolescence. This sure is a task for social politics on the whole. Preventive measures have to start with guiding adolescents and young adults into parenthood, to generate and support their readiness to have children. After that, it is important to enhance endeavours for coaching and support of bonding and good parenting. Early information before and during pregnancy is necessary. In the very early life of babies, too, programmes in joint efforts with birth clinics and midwives are needed for parents and staff. Existing models should be evaluated and funded.

To prevent mental disorders, the current preventive medical checkups for young children are insufficient. Earlier than at present, screening devices should be introduced in order to detect children with psychiatric, psychosocial and developmental disorders. It would be wise to agree on a standard of such screenings EU-wide. Then, service utilization ought to be improved in immigrant families, and an enhanced understanding of their special needs is needed and might be developed by intensifying their participation in early screening and intervention procedures.

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