

European Pact for Mental Health and Well-being

ProMenPol setting “education”

The practitioners’ views

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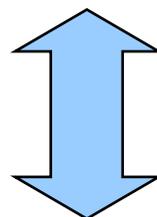
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European Pact priority area: Mental Health in Youth and Education



**ProMenPol key setting:
Education / schools**

European Pact – why? (1)

- The foundation of life-long mental health is laid in the early years
- Up to 50% of mental disorders have their onset during adolescence
- Mental health problems can be identified in between 10% and 20% of young people

European Pact – why? (2)

- Suicide rates per 100 000 among adolescents (15-19 year old), Eurostat 2006:
 - EU-27 total 4.9 (boys 7.4, girls 2.2)
 - The highest level: Lithuania (16.4), Finland (14.5)
 - The lowest level: Greece (1.0), Spain (2.2)

Adult mental health is formed during early years

Early life mental health promotion is suicide prevention



European Pact – actions proposed

- **Early intervention** throughout the **educational system**
- Programmes to **promote parenting skills**
- **Training of professionals** involved in the health, education, youth and other relevant sectors
- Integration of **socio-emotional learning** into the curricular and extracurricular activities and the cultures of pre-schools and schools
- **Prevent abuse, bullying, violence** against young people and their exposure to **social exclusion**
- **Participation** of youth in education, culture, sport and employment

Brief introduction to setting “education / schools” in ProMenPol



Why schools?

- Young people spend a good proportion of their life at schools
- Schools have significant influence on their behaviour and development
- Young people at schools can be easily reached for implementing MHP programmes

Definition

- Schools = educational settings for children and adolescents
- Educational systems within EU differ substantially
- ProMenPol context:
 - Educational settings include children and adolescents in formal education (from 5/6 years) on to university students
 - Preschoolers and kindergarten are not included
- Limitations, ProMenPol do not target directly:
 - Family, home
 - Out of school and marginalized children & adolescents



ProMenPol annual conference 2008

- Education / schools workshop
- 15 MHP practitioners participated + experts
- Feedback from workshop:
 - Clarification and responses to European Pact
 - Lessons learned from practitioners
 - Practitioners' view on EU-Policy

Clarification and responses to European Pact

- Prior to the ProMenPol conference none of the attending practitioners heard about the content of the European Pact
- Discussion on broader scope of compatibility of data in the field of MHP:
 - Missing quantifying and qualifying statistics are often used as an excuse for inaction
 - Heterogeneity of data
 - Establishing clear indicators to measure MH is needed

Lessons learned from practitioners

Link between educational and workplace setting

- **Commingling educational and workplace setting** (esp. from teacher's perspective)
- It is necessary not only to inform the teachers about MHP programmes adequate for their students, but also to provide programmes for the teachers from a workplace perspective

Role of school leaders and administration

- **Early involvement of school leaders** helps to create support mechanism for teachers in launching MHP programmes
- **Cooperation of the school administration** is seen as one of the biggest challenges for the educational setting
- Nevertheless, cooperation can be achieved by:
 - Using the “language” of the school leaders / administration
 - Highlighting better achievements created by MHP

Arguments in favour of MHP

- The linkage between MH and **social and emotional skills** can be used as a promising argument
- **Outcome focussed argumentation** (improved school performance and learning success) is often successful

From key words to system

- Regarding content of MHP programmes, the group named a few **key words** like resilience, social skills, problem solving, networking, expression of emotions and goal setting (they could have extended the list much further)
- But it is not as much about key words, but more about setting up **systematic way** to install MHP in schools

MHP in curricula and textbooks

- One way of achieving systematic way to install MHP in schools is to **access curricula via textbooks**
 - For example: in Norway, life-skills are taught in biology, because it can be found in the textbook
- The existence of MHP in textbooks often makes it easier for teachers to address and integrate the topic in their curriculum

Practitioners' view on EU-Policy

- The EU-Mandate on MH issues does not seem to be clear, which leads to the impression that the EU has only little authority in the subject area
- Rather sceptical view on EU policy making within the educational setting due to the perceived gap between policy making and practice (different competencies)
- There seems to be no powerful lobby for MH, but mental disorders
- European Pact gives a chance to raise awareness of the importance of MHP in schools (likewise for students and teachers)
- European Pact helps to open the door on a school administrative level

Main lessons to be learned from field trials

- Applicability of ProMenPol database and toolkit
- Effectiveness of the tools
- Difficulties in implementation of the tools
- Gaps in MHP tools available



Feedback available in 2009

Thank You!

www.mentalhealthpromotion.net

www.suicidology.ee

