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Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION AT THE POLICY WORKSHOP.....	5
2.1 PROMENPOL AND THE MENTAL HEALTH PACT	5
2.2 PROMENPOL AND SUPPORTS FOR PRACTITIONERS.....	5

1. Introduction

The second annual ProMenPol Policy Workshop - **Policy Based on Real People - Mental Health Promotion and Policy that makes a Difference** took place in Brussels on the 11th of December 2008 in the premises of KoWi, the EU Liaison Office of German Research Organisations.

The aim of the second ProMenPol policy workshop was to bring to the attention of policy makers the issues raised by practitioners in the Annual Conference held in Berlin during the summer. In Berlin, participants had been introduced to the European Mental Health Pact (EMHP) and asked to raise issues that they would like to be addressed during the second ProMenPol policy workshop.

The policy workshop heard from a number of key speakers who provided a state of the art overview of mental health policy issues within Europe. Guest speakers included Dr. David Gold who was responsible for developing and disseminating the SOLVE programme during his time with the International Labour Organisation, Jürgen Schefflein, from DG Health and Consumer Protection, and Gregor Henderson who has been assisting a number of national governments to frame their mental health policies.

The views of the participants of the Annual Conference were presented to the workshop by Dr. Richard Wynne (Work Research Centre), Merike Sisask (ERSI) and Prof. Eija Stengård (THL). A description of work in progress in the ProMenPol project was provided by Katrin Zardo (BAuA). The workshop was chaired by Dr. Karl Kuhn (BAuA) who also co-moderated the discussion with Dr. Richard Wynne.

The presentations made at the workshop are now available on the ProMenPol Website www.mentalhealthpromotion.net.

2. Summary of the Discussion at the Policy Workshop

The discussions that took place at the workshop ranged widely, but there were two main themes that emerged:

- The role of ProMenPol in the context of the **European Pact for Mental Health** (EPMH, see: <http://www.ec-mental-health-process.net> for more information).
- The nature of supports that practitioners need to improve their practice

2.1 ProMenPol and the Mental Health Pact

There are a number of obvious ways in which ProMenPol can contribute to the development of the Mental Health Pact. These include:

- Given the fact that the ProMenPol website attracts more than 40,000 visitors per month and has almost 500 members, it can help to promote and disseminate the Mental Health Pact amongst its membership and visitors to the site.
- The ProMenPol project covers three of the five major areas for action of the Pact – schools, workplaces and older people’s residences. In collecting examples of good practice and conducting field trials in each of these settings, it can offer a wealth of experience to all who are interested in promoting the pact.
- The ProMenPol aim of bringing policy makers and practitioners closer together provides an obvious means of boosting communications about the pact, sharing ideas and learning from initiatives.
- There are many difficulties facing the implementation of the Pact. Amongst these is the issue of engaging with stakeholders in each of the settings of interest. There is a need to engage with ‘early adopters’ of mental health promotion if it is to be successful. ProMenPol, through the package of services that it offers and the field trials that it runs offers significant possibilities in this regard.
- It was generally agreed that the ProMenPol approach was practical and applied. The next challenge was to make it more relevant to policy makers by providing information about what can be achieved, in what specific areas of policy, based on what evidence. The ProMenPol approach has the potential to bring policy makers in contact with skilled practitioners and by this means to deliver more effective policy formation. Effectively, the ProMenPol partners need to consider how they can place people at the centre of the EPMH and more specifically contribute to the five EPMH thematic events.

2.2 ProMenPol and Supports for Practitioners

There were a number of suggestions concerning improvements that might be made to the ProMenPol services that would enhance their effectiveness. These included:

- Providing clearer information about the criteria for inclusion of tools that have been included in the database and toolkit

- The website should include descriptions of good practice, especially in relation to practitioners' usage of tools within the database
- The website should provide users with the opportunity to provide feedback about their experience of tool usage
- It was suggested that ProMenPol should emphasise more worthwhile tools and particularly those which provide basic strategies and which have a broad scope in each setting.
- It was pointed out that even if a practitioner has mental health promotion tools at hand there is no guarantee that they will be implemented. More substantive assistance is required above and beyond the availability of tools. 'Hand holding' and support are needed.
- The issue of transition was raised. Transitions are developmental points at which mental health issues often arise, e.g. transition from school to work or from work to retirement. This is a process that is not well addressed by the separation of issues into the three areas of the ProMenPol project nor is it dealt with well in the five thematic seminars organised under the auspices of the EMHP. The overlaps between school, the workplace and older people need to be addressed. Transition tools are included in the ProMenPol database but they are not highlighted as such. This could be resolved by adapting the database.