

Mental Health Briefing Sheets

Facts and Activities in Member States

GERMANY

Situation on Mental Health

Suicide: The annual number of suicides in Germany in the last year is between 10000 and 13000 (on average 10 per 100,000), and suicide rates increase with age. For youth and young adults suicides are the second highest cause of death after accidents. The younger age groups, especially females between 15 and 25 years, have the highest rates.

Mental disorders: In Germany mental disorders comprise 9.8% of all illnesses and rank 4th most frequent of all illnesses. The proportion of mental disorders in the causes for work incapacity and for early retirement has increased dramatically in the last 10 years.

Children's Mental Health: Mental health problems in children and adolescents constitute health impairments with major implications regarding individual well-being as well as daily and social functioning. In addition, these problems often burden the social partners of the individual. Within the German Health Interview and Examination Survey for Children and Adolescents (KiGGS), the parents of 14478 children and adolescents aged 3-17 answered the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) which assesses behavioural problems and strengths in the areas emotional problems, hyperactivity, behavioural problems, peer problems and prosocial behaviour.

The parent reports of approximately 11.5 % girls (G) and 17.8 % boys (B) hint on behavioural or emotional problems, respectively. However of 92.5 % respondents, 86.3 % showed adequate prosocial behaviour. Most prevalent problem areas are behavioural problems (G=11.9 %, B=17.9 %) emotional problems (G=9.7 %, B=8.6 %) and hyperactivity problems (G=4.8 %, B=10.8 %). The test-data of approximately 8.1 % of the respondents with high socio-economic status (SES), 13.4 % of those with middle SES and 23,2 % of those with low SES hinted at mental health problems. Migrants are more frequently affected as non-migrants.

Results point at the need for early detection and prevention of commencing mental health problems. Especially the non-easily accessible groups like those with low socio-economic status or migrants have to be considered.

Policy context

There are mental health policies in Germany that are included with in the general law of social insurance V (oblige health promotion) and IX (related to the duties of cost providers). There is also a legislation that entitles all children to medical examinations for the identification of illness or disorders in physical or mental development.

The German ADHD-net is currently built up on behalf of the German Ministry of Health, with the aim of supporting health management for ADHD patients of all ages.

Examples of activities on priority areas:

Prevention of suicide and depression

In 2003, the "German Alliance against Depression" was founded as a non-profit association creating the preconditions for a national extension of the activities. Meanwhile 14 regions in Germany initiated similar projects under the common roof of the "Alliance Against Depression", and another 30 – 40 other German regions are in an early stage of preparation. The network entitled "Depression and Suicide" has been created as a part of the joint health research programme of the Ministry of Health and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. The German Research Network on Depression and Suicidality connects 15 German research centres and university hospitals as well as the most important institutions in the German health care system. The Network will be supported with 500.000 Euros every year.

Mental health in youth and education

Interventions in schools were orientated to mental health promotion and to drugs addiction. The project "Regional Crisis Management for Young People and Suicides" aims to ensure - especially after a suicide attempt followed by medical treatment - the examination by a consultant specialist, and if necessary a psychiatric/specialist treatment as well as the required psychosocial support.

"Integrative Organisation in care of children and adolescents with mental disorders in Germany" is a project that has been supported by the German Ministry of Health. It attempts to qualify the integrative approach in therapy with several other non-medical institutions, especially youth welfare services and school. Interdisciplinary Organisation of help and prevention for children with mental handicap – support a holistic approach to promote the mental health of children and adolescents with special handicap emphasizing the crucial role of parents and guardians. There is also medical consiliary cooperation for the care of mentally disabled adolescents in a therapeutic community under the auspices of a youth welfare organisation in Germany.

"MindMatters" is a Programme for the Promotion of Mental Health in Primary and Secondary Schools that follows the overall aims of mental health promotion and the prevention of mental illness within the framework of health promoting schools.

Mental health at the workplace

"German Network for Workplace Health Promotion" linked to the "German forum for prevention and health promotion", established in 2001, develops health goals and coordinates policies in this field.

In 2004 the measure "Betriebliches Eingliederungsmanagement" was introduced in Germany, with its aim to oblige employers to work out a strategy for employees to come back to work after being absent for more than 6 weeks.

"INQA – Initiative New Quality of Work" is a project organised jointly by the federal government, the federal states, social insurance institutions, the social partners, the Bertelsmann foundation, the Hans-Böckler foundation and private industry. The initiators of INQA believe that promoting a new quality of work is an important task and a future challenge. INQA's goal is to combine employees' expectations of healthy and satisfying working conditions with the need to be competitive in today's economy. The basic idea is: "acting together - with individual responsibility". All those involved want to initiate a broad debate about the future of work. The aim is to raise public awareness of the demands of tomorrow's world of work and how it can be reconciled with personal goals. Even in times of structural change in the economy and serious

problems in the labour market, the issues of quantity and quality of work remain inseparable. In selected sectors the partners involved are developing and implementing concepts for the improvement of the working situation. INQA promotes good practice examples from companies that have already introduced exemplary models of innovative health and safety protection at work. Furthermore, INQA initiates the exchange of ideas and promotes cooperation between companies. INQA Demography established a company network (the Demography Network-ddn) designed to facilitate the sharing of experience. Mental Health is an important issue in this initiative with a large variety of models of good practices on the website (www.inqa.de). INQA is currently in its second period and runs for three more years than originally planned because the results in the different expert groups (thematic networks) are very positive.

Mental health in older People

Action programme on multi-generational homes is a project that brings together young people and the elderly. In this way the cohesion of generations is strengthened by sharing each other's values while living together. A position paper on the report on the Elderly has been prepared by the German federal government.

Combating stigma and social exclusion

The School project "Crazy? So What!" covers Mental Health, Mental Health Promotion, Prevention and Antistigma Work in Schools. This project is based on results of modern stigma research: contact with people who experienced mental illness, as well as information and education soonest lead to the reduction of stereotypes, anxieties and distance.

To reduce existing stigmatization of patients with mental disorders the federal Ministry of Health promotes an Alliance for Mental Health which aims to implement wide ranging measures to fight against stigma and discrimination in all relevant settings.

¹ Sources of information for the production of this briefing sheet:

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Version revised and updated by Member State

Mental Health in Youth and Education. Consensus paper prepared by Jané-Llopis & Braddick (2008).

Mental Health and the Workplace. Consensus paper prepared by McDaid (2008)

Mental Health in Older People. Consensus paper prepared by Jané-Llopis & Gabilondo (2008)

Prevention of Depression and Suicide. Consensus paper prepared by Wahlbeck & Mäkinen (2008)

Contributions from Member States - 2008, available at: <http://www.ec-mental-health-process.net/>

EMIP Consortium (2006). Country reports: Implementation of Mental Health Promotion and Prevention Policies and Strategies in the EU member states and applicant countries (EMIP)

McCollam et al., (2008). Mental Health in the EU - Key facts, figures and activities. A background paper.

Jané-Llopis & Anderson (Eds) (2006). "Mental health promotion and mental disorder prevention across European Member States: a collection of country stories" (2nd edition), Luxembourg: European Communities