



The place of research in the Joint Action Mental Health and Well-being

Brussels, 20 January 2015

Jürgen Scheftlein
Unit "Health Programme and Diseases"
Health and Food Safety Directorate General
European Commission



Mental health and capital – a key resource under strain

Mental health and well-being: a key resource for people, countries and the EU as a whole

A resource under strain:

- Mental health problems and disorders are leading contributors to Europe's burden of disease. Major depression is among the top three causes in the burden of disease in each EU-Member State. Mental disorders as most costly disorder group and / because they often hit people during their productive age.

A need to act on mental health and to improve our understanding.



The approach of the European Pact for Mental health and Well-being

- Mental health – providing challenges and opportunities;
- A priority and responsibility for all society: citizens themselves, health systems, other actors including workplaces, schools, NGOs including patient and family organisations;
- The necessity of investing in health promotion, disease prevention and improving treatment and care.
- The EU can support Member States by raising awareness, promoting the cooperation between Member States, supporting the exchange of good practices, and disseminating recommendations and knowledge.

The Joint Action Mental Health and Well-being

- To be implemented under lead of Portugal between 2013 and 2016. Now finalising first draft reports and recommendations.
- Objectives:
 1. Review of literature and EU-projects;
 2. Analyse situation in participating Member States, building on study "European profile of prevention and promotion of mental health (EuroPoPP-MH)"
 3. Identify good practices;
 4. Develop policy recommendations and agree on a common framework for action.

The Joint Action Mental Health and Well-being

- Five themes addressed through work packages:
 1. Taking action against depression and to prevent suicides, eHealth;
 2. Promoting the transition to community care;
 3. Mental health at workplaces;
 4. Mental health and schools;
 5. Mental health in all policies.

The place of research in the Joint Action Mental Health and Well-being

1. The Joint Action builds on the existing knowledge base, including from EU-research, which it maps and summarises;
2. The Joint Action includes itself a research dimension: it maps and analyses the situations in countries;
3. The key objective of the Joint Action is to translate the existing knowledge into operational recommendations and a commonly supported framework of action,
4. The Joint Action may also issue recommendations for future research.



A first reaction to the ROAMER recommendations for Mental Health research in Europe

General first feedback:

- Congratulation to the work undertaken, both as a process and also the resulting recommendations on research priorities and research advances needed for mental health research in Europe.
- An encouragement to give good visibility policy brief and the consensus document.

Some spontaneous personal reflections (1)

The health and well-being dimension:

- Mental health should be seen as a priority across the whole lifespan, from childhood and youth via adulthood into old age;

Body and soul are one:

- Mental health and physical health are intrinsically linked, and there is a need for research into the interaction between them, including co-morbidity aspects;

Some spontaneous personal thoughts on specific points (2)

EU-objectives on growth and employment:

- Mental health is a key resource for the employability and productivity of people at work, while work is itself a factor supporting mental health and unemployment is highly detrimental;

Research and practice

- The application of research knowledge will be promoted if academic researchers and practitioners, including those outside of the health field, have a dialogue.

Next steps: Mental Health Compass

Further development and implementation of EU Mental Health Compass, with the objective of disseminating the Joint Action Action Framework and inspiring investment in mental health:

- The Mental Health Compass is an internet based database of good practices. It will be developed into an interactive process to give better visibility to good practices and leadership :
- Member States and stakeholders (from health, social affairs, education, workplaces, civil society, etc) will be invited to share reports about their activities and good practices;
- Annual reports will be prepared, including recommendations;
- Annual Forum events will bring leaders and good practices together.
- A process starting in 2015 to run over three years.