

THE WHO EUROPEAN MENTAL HEALTH ACTION PLAN

M. Muijen

WHO Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen, Denmark

During the last few years the economic crisis has focused attention on the dual need to protect the wellbeing of the population and safeguard the care and treatment of people with mental disorders. Many countries are facing budget cuts, resulting in higher rates of unemployment, which is associated with depression and suicide. Countries are also committed to reform in mental health. This commitment is attributable to a combination of the aim to stop obsolete institutional forms of care, awareness of modern and effective forms of treatment, concerns about human rights and a stronger voice of advocacy groups. This combination of factors is raising the priority of mental health, and in response the WHO Regional Office for Europe is drafting the European Mental Health Action Plan, outlining strategic objectives to address the need for effective and efficient mental health promotion and for the prevention and treatment of mental disorders. The European Action Plan is developed in close cooperation with the Global Action Plan.

The European Mental Health Action Plan puts forward actions that have the potential to improve wellbeing of populations and access and quality of services. Particular emphasis is given to the point that service structure, however excellent, is necessary but on its own insufficient. Safety, effectiveness and absence of stigma as experienced by patients and their families will determine acceptability and outcome of care.

This is an important time to advocate for sustained investment in mental health care. The European Action Plan offers a platform for such consensus.