

Mental health in all policies

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The Nordic countries are highly developed welfare states with a long tradition of egalitarian health and welfare policies. The Nordic welfare model is based on tax-funded public services and a high level of social protection. Improvements in mental health and mental health services have been on the agenda in these countries during recent decades. Mental health services have undergone a thorough reform, from an emphasis on psychiatric institutional care to the current emphasis on out-patient care and social participation. The reduction in numbers of hospital beds for psychiatric patients, especially for those with long-term disorders, has been met by an increase of psychiatric treatment in primary care and by growth in housing institutions provided by social care. In spite of the reforms, there is still a considerable life expectancy gap between people with mental disorders and the rest of the population.

A core element of Nordic mental health policies is a focus on mental health promotion, preventive actions and social inclusion. Acknowledging that determinants of mental health often lie in non-health domains such as social and family policies, labor policies and education policies, the Health in All Policies approach has been developed. Health in All Policies is an approach to public policies across sectors that systematically takes into account the health implications of decisions, seeks synergies, and avoids harmful health impacts in order to improve population health and health equity. In Europe, different models and best practices have been developed to secure that public policies across sectors systematically takes into account the mental health implications of decisions and avoids harmful mental health impacts. This includes effective safeguards to protect policies from distortion by commercial and vested interests and influence. Especially in times of economic hardship, non-health policies may have a decisive impact on populations' health including mental health.

References:

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