

MEMO

TO:

DR M. MUIJEN, REGIONAL ADVISER IN MENTAL HEALTH OF THE EUROPEAN REGIONAL OFFICE OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION.

FROM:

THE EUROPEAN PARTICIPANTS OF THE 2ND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY, BANGKOK, 4-8 NOVEMBER 2007.

Dr. Anna Firkowska-Mankiewicz (Poland); Dr. Luis Salvador Carulla (Spain); Dr. Vasilva Dimoska (Macedonia); Dr. Violeta Dimoska (Macedonia); Dr. Eric Emerson (UK); Dr Stella Playbell (Cyprus); Mr. Denis Persy (France); Mr. Rob Greig (UK); Ms. Zsuzsa Csato (Hungary); and Dr. Itzhak Levav (Israel, Rapporteur).

The participants acknowledged with satisfaction the willingness of the Euro/WHO Regional Adviser to develop further action on the subject of intellectual disability.

The meeting covered the following items:

To recommend "what" needs to be done in the short- and mid-term planning with regard to several domains of action of highest priority;

To recommend "how" to achieve the above objectives; and

To suggest possible partners ("with whom") to collaborate in both the formulation and implementation of the above course of action.

Data. The group felt that epidemiological data are needed, both for advocacy and program/service planning. The Atlas data describe the resources available but knowledge on needs is wanting. The areas to be covered should include magnitude of the problem, mortality, co-morbid mental and physical disorders/conditions and family burden. The group agreed that immediate action could be started based on the Atlas information and it should not be delayed until the new data become available.

Advocacy. The group recommended initiating regional activities to increase awareness in all segments of society. Regional Conferences similar to the one on mental health (Helsinki, 2005) and alcoholism constitute suitable frameworks. The group suggested to initiate consultations with governmental officers in order to tap the extent of their commitment before other stakeholders (specially, NGOs) are called in.

Policy. The group expressed high concern for the (possible chaotic) process of de-institutionalization in East Europe. Suitable policy and strategies need to be developed.

Training. The Atlas identified great deficits in the area of training, particularly of pediatricians (only 38% of countries reported training programs for pediatricians).

Circulation of information. Actions to strengthen networks are needed to facilitate the circulation of relevant information (good practices and others).

Mobilization of resources. The group insisted that EURO/WHO should approach EU and NGOs. Both are active in the field and are ready to support the planned activities.

The following were additional comments made by the participants:

The Atlas data need further refinement, issues of reliability and comprehensiveness were noted, as well as statistical analysis.

A focal point on intellectual disability should be appointed in both EURO/WHO and, specially, at country level.

Programs to support the families of people with intellectual disability are needed.

Note, for example, that the Atlas identified a minority of countries providing respite care.

Programs for early intervention and support for people with intellectual disability are needed to prevent deterioration.

Pressure of governments to initiate action is a top priority, the Atlas identified many deficits in governmental action.

A "green paper" needs to be developed collectively.

Collaboration. The participants expressed willingness to meet as soon as possible with the Regional Adviser (RA) to offer collaboration in several areas, including charting a course of action and time table. (Mr Rob Creig (UK) wishes to meet early with the RA, before he takes another appointment.)