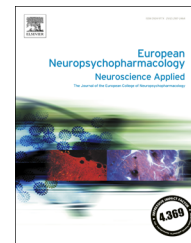




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SHORT COMMUNICATION

Evidence-based national suicide prevention taskforce in Europe: A consensus position paper



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1. Background

More than 150,000 in Europe and 800,000 people worldwide, die every year by suicide (WHO, 2015), accounting for 1.4% of all annual deaths. Suicide is the second, and in some European countries even the first leading cause of death amongst young people aged 15-24 years (WHO, 2015), thus exceeding the number of accidental deaths. In Europe, suicide rates are highest in Eastern Europe (Nock et al., 2008). Mann et al. (2005) identified a number of effective, national level, suicide prevention strategies.

The European parliament resolution on Mental Health 2008/2209 (INI) adopted a series of recommendations for European member states. It proposed areas for priority action as defined in the European Pact on Mental Health and Well-Being. Therein, the European Parliament emphasizes the need to implement cross-sectorial programs for the prevention of depression and suicide across all member states.

In 2005 Ministers of Health from the WHO - European region signed an agreement stating that suicide prevention programs should be implemented in all European countries. Since then, many countries have developed such programs,

however, no up-to-date, evidence-based cross-European minimal standard for effective national suicide prevention exists as yet. Recently, 29 suicide prevention experts from 17 European countries (The Task Force for the European Evidence-Based Suicide Prevention Program, EESPP) performed a systematic review of evidence for the effectiveness of suicide prevention interventions that has been published over the last decade (Zalsman et al., 2016). During three face-to-face meetings, the EESPP group developed a consensus declaration that, based on the findings of the systematic reviews, summarizes the minimal requirements for a national suicide prevention programs and of the strategies to employ.

2. Evidence-based suicide prevention strategies

Every national suicide prevention program should rely on evidence-based strategies.

The suicide prevention strategies that were found to have the highest levels of evidence according to the 2016 systematic review published in the Lancet Psychiatry (Zalsman et al., 2016) may be divided into two complementary approaches, public health policy strategies and health care strategies (Figure 1).

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