The web portal My Blue Box: an International tool about COPMI

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INTRODUCTION
Depending on the local context, certain individuals and groups are particularly at risk of experiencing mental health problems. These vulnerable groups may (but do not necessarily) include infants and children exposed to maltreatment, emotional abuse, neglect and parents’ mental illness.

In a research conducted in 2010 one-third of all European citizens - 179 million people - had at least one brain disorder, an astonishing figure even if many had only minor disorders such as anxiety or tension-type headache. The total European 2010 cost of brain disorders was 798 billion euro per year, of which in average direct health care costs represent 37%, direct nonmedical costs 23%, and indirect costs 40%. It is clear that brain diseases are the current and future major health economic challenge for Europe. Mood disorders and dementia represented the most costly diseases for European society, up to 113.4 and 105.2 billion euros/year, respectively (Gustavsson et al., 2011; Olesen et al., 2012).

If we consider that many of these 179 million people are parents and their children may have a higher rate of behavioral, developmental, and emotional problems compared with those in the general community, it’s necessary to operate in a preventive way.

Emotional distress can, and does, happen in all types of families, regardless of their background. Most parents want the best for their children. However, some parents may emotionally and psychologically harm their children because of stress, poor parenting skills, social isolation, lack of available resources or inappropriate expectations of their children. They may neglect or emotionally abuse their children because the parents or caregivers were emotionally abused themselves as children. Emotional abuse has increasingly been linked to parental mental health problems, domestic violence, drug and alcohol misuse, being abused or having been in care as children (Iwaniec and Herbert 1999). Indirect costs represent the long-term economic consequences to society because of child abuse and neglect. These include costs associated with increased use of our health-care system, juvenile and adult criminal activity, mental illness, substance abuse, and domestic violence.

Mental health statistics report: • 20% of adolescents may experience a mental health problem in any given year • 50% of mental health problems are established by age 14 and 75% by age 24 • 10% of children and young people (aged 5-16 years) have a clinically diagnosable mental problem, yet 70% of children and adolescents who experience mental health problems have not had appropriate interventions at a sufficiently early age.

OBJECTIVES
In the context of national efforts to develop and implement mental health policies and programmes – as defined in the Mental health action plan 2013-2020 - it is vital to meet not only the needs of persons with mental disorders, but also to protect and promote the mental well-being of all citizens. Mental health evolves throughout the life-cycle.

The early stages of life present a particularly important opportunity to promote mental health and prevent mental disorders, as up to 50% of mental disorders in adults begin before the age of 14 years. Children and adolescents with mental disorders should be provided with early intervention through evidence-based psycho-social and other nonpharmacological interventions based in the community, avoiding institutionalization and medicalization.

In particular, it’s important to improve protective factors by:

- providing information to people with mental disorders, their families and care-givers, on causes and consequences of disorders, treatments and recovery options, as well as on healthy lifestyle behaviors in order to improve overall health and well being
- increasing public knowledge and understanding about mental health, for instance, through media awareness and campaigns to reduce stigmatization and discrimination and to promote human rights
- providing services and programmes to children and adults who have experienced adverse life events that address their trauma, promote recovery and resilience and avoid re-traumatizing those who seek support
- addressing the needs of children with parents with chronic mental disorders within promotion and preventive programmes
- enhancing the use of social media in promotion and prevention strategies.