

# DEVELOPMENT OF AN ACTION PLAN FOR THE PREVENTION OF SUICIDE IN FLANDERS (BELGIUM)

EVA DUMON, GWENDOLYN PORTZKY, KEES VAN HEERINGEN

## INTRODUCTION

This poster describes the process, key strategies and interventions of a new targeted action plan for suicide prevention in Flanders (Belgium). In 2012 the action plan will be presented to the Flemish government by the Flemish Minister of Welfare, Public Health and Family Affairs. The action plan aims at providing a platform for a regional policy on suicide prevention (2012 - 2020). The main challenging health target of this plan is:

**“to decrease the suicide mortality rate by 20% in the year 2020 compared to the baseline year 2000”.**

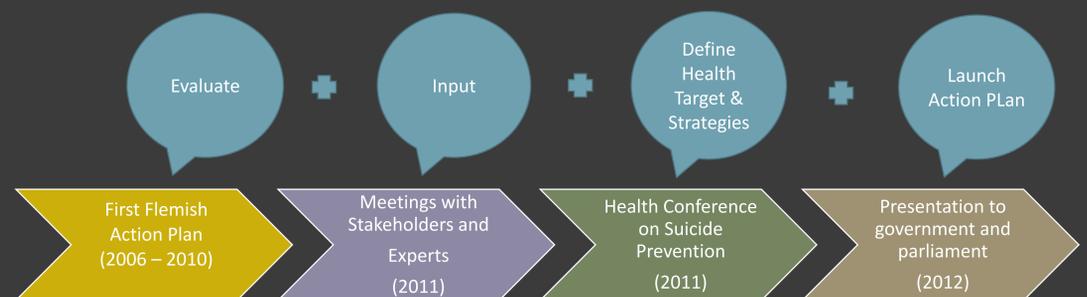
## METHOD

Taking into account the evaluation of the first action plan on suicide prevention that was carried out in Flanders between 2006 and 2010, the Flemish Minister of Welfare, Public Health and Family Affairs established a consortium of experts to prepare a health conference on suicide prevention and to develop a new action plan.

First, a new website and a call for actions were launched. Secondly, three working groups of stakeholders and experts were set up to make an inventory of possible actions, according to the three levels of prevention (universal, selective and indicated prevention). Thirdly, at the health conference the health target and key strategies were defined. After the conference the government and consortium made a final selection of actions based on five criteria:

- Suicide specificity
- Link with one of the five strategies (see below)
- Cost-effectiveness
- Quality of evidence
- Implementation opportunities

Finally, in 2012 the Health Target, Strategies and Actions will be presented to the Flemish government, the advisory board of Welfare, Health and Family affairs and the Flemish parliament. The plan will be launched in September 2012.



## RESULTS

The new action plan for suicide prevention identifies five key strategies. Each strategy incorporates actions across the continuum of suicide prevention supporting universal, selective and indicated interventions.

### 5 STRATEGIES

1. To promote mental wellbeing in the population (e.g. enforcing individual resilience and self-help, encouraging people to seek help, reducing stigma, enhancing social support, supporting the media);
2. To provide accessible support services such as suicide helplines and online help;
3. To educate gatekeepers in the community and in mental health care about suicide prevention and create networks for them;
4. To reduce the risk of suicidal behaviour among high risk groups and vulnerable people;
5. To develop guidelines for the prevention of suicide and a multidisciplinary guideline for management and treatment of suicidal behavior.

### 9 NEW ACTIONS

- Development and implementation of e-mental health based self-help programs targeting the general population, aiming to build individual resilience and the capacity for self-help;
- Setting up social networks for the elderly;
- General Flemish suicide helpline and online help programme;
- Development of a computerised self-help programme for adolescents with depression;
- Training programmes for gatekeepers and development and dissemination of a poster campaign “Is your patient suicidal?” in general hospitals, GP’s,....;
- Pilot new treatments: Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy and Future Oriented Training;
- Development and implementation of guidelines for the prevention of suicide in schools, the workplace and the media;
- Development and implementation of a multidisciplinary guideline for the early detection, intervention and treatment of suicidal behavior;
- Development and implementation of guidelines for improving the chain of care.

## CONCLUSION

A targeted action plan for suicide prevention was recently developed in Flanders by the Flemish government, together with experts and stakeholders in the field of suicide prevention. The plan includes five key strategies and a broad range of thoroughly selected actions. Overall, the plan aims at reducing the number of suicides in Flanders.

## REFERENCES

Ministerie van Welzijn, Volksgezondheid en Gezin (2012), “Gezondheidsdoelstelling ‘Preventie van Zelfdoding’ & Vlaams Actieplan 2012-2020”.

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