



PRESS RELEASE

World Mental Health Day on 10th October devoted to Suicide Prevention

Leipzig, 8th October 2019. Worldwide, every year more than 800.000 people die by suicide and the number of those committing a non-fatal suicide attempt is estimated to be 10 to 20 times higher. Further alarming is the fact that it remains the second leading cause of death among 15 -29 year olds globally. The European Alliance Against Depression ([EAAD](#)) therefore endorses that the WHO has set the topic for this year's World Mental Health Day to focus on suicide prevention.

Mental illnesses are the main reason for suicides

In western countries, the vast majority of suicides occur on the background of a mental illness. Depression plays a key role: "Depression is characterized by great suffering and hopelessness. The perception of existing problems is aggravated within a depression and hope is lost that this painful condition will ever get better. In desperation, affected people consequently see suicide as the only way to escape this unbearable condition," says Prof. Ulrich Hegerl, president of the EAAD and holder of the Senckenberg Distinguished Professorship at the Department of Psychiatry, Psychosomatics and Psychotherapy at the Goethe University Frankfurt. Due to the close link between depression and suicidal behaviour, improved treatment leads to a reduced rate of suicidal behaviour (suicide attempts and suicides).

Suicide prevention and mental health at work

Enterprises are increasingly aware of the tremendous costs caused by presenteeism and absenteeism due to depression and the responsibility to support mental health of their employees. However, whereas there are established guidelines on alcohol related problems, there is much uncertainty on how to address the topic of depression or even suicidality. Prof. Ulrich Hegerl emphasizes: "Depression is such a common and serious condition, so that some basic knowledge on it is needed in large but also small and medium sized enterprises". By training HR managers, executives and employees, affected colleagues may find their way to professional treatment more quickly. Part of such trainings is to learn on how to have a conversation with an employee who, for example, is no longer joining lunch with his colleagues or sitting in front of his PC, crying. How do I address my concerns and observations? What advice can I give? Maybe the colleague needs professional help? Such measures can pave the way to professional treatment thus avoiding the costs of presenteeism.

New EU funded project: Mental health promotion and suicide prevention at the workplace

The EAAD together with the [German Depression Foundation](#), will be part of a large-scale research project funded by the European Commission and starting in January 2020, led by EAAD vice president Prof. Ella Arensman, involving 15 countries and 17 partners. The main objective of MINDUP ("Mental Health Promotion and Intervention in Occupational Settings") is to promote mental health of employees in the workplace by developing, implementing and evaluating various (online) interventions and training materials. These interventions, designed to address a range of mental health difficulties and psychiatric conditions (such as depression, anxiety disorders, stress-related symptoms), will be targeted at and delivered to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the areas of construction, healthcare and ICT. Overall, MINDUP aims at improving the care of depression among employees and to reduce suicidal



behaviour. While developing these resources, we will build on proven concepts (EAAD's 4-level program, [iFightDepression self-management program and information website](#)), which we will adapt to the specific needs of SMEs, but also develop new interventions and provide them in an online platform for employees and managers.

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The European Alliance Against Depression Within the EAAD, a NGO and network of experts has been collaborating since 2008 to tackle depression and suicidal behaviour globally by implementing community based 4-level interventions. This 4-level intervention concept has been rigorously evaluated and proven effective in reducing suicidal behaviour, enhancing public awareness of depression and improving knowledge and skills in dealing with depression and suicide in GPs and gatekeepers. Systematic process analyses, a large catalogue of intervention materials in many languages, practical experience from 10 years of implementation, and implementation guidelines for those interested to adopt this 4-level intervention approach are available to carry out own regional suicide preventive community based programmes. Next to that, the EAAD has been engaged in research on depression, eMentalHealth and suicide prevention over the past 10 years.

The German Depression Foundation The German Depression Foundation has set itself the goal of better care for depression and the reduction of suicidal behaviour in Germany. In addition to research activities, it offers patients and relatives a variety of information and support services such as an online discussion forum and a nationwide info line on depression. In 86 cities and communities, regional alliances have been established, conducting 4-level intervention programmes.