



Summary of the EU- project: Citizens and Resilience. The Balance between Awareness and Fear.

Introduction

The European Commission has awarded a proposal of Impact, the Dutch Knowledge Centre for Post-Disaster Psycho-Social Care with a grant, under the pilot project "Victims of Terrorist Acts" of the directorate-general justice, freedom and security. The project is called: Citizens and Resilience. The balance between awareness and fear.

Nature of the problem

The nature of terrorism has changed. Whereas it used to be, in the past, a local or regional threat directed against domestic authorities, terrorism has now become a international phenomenon. It has become an attack against values of liberty, democracy, tolerance and the rule of law, the values on which the EU was founded. Terrorism has major effects, as we can learn from the scientific research done after 9/11. A lot of these effects have to do with fear, not only post-attack, but also as a result of the threat: look at the recent Eurobarometer findings. And real or perceived threat makes no difference. Fear will lead to several physical and mental health problems, which in the short and long term also have strong social and economical impacts.

Solving the problem

From the psychosocial point of view, we need to rely on two key-points: Information to and communication with the citizens, both after a terrorist attack and in advance, and community based interventions post attack.

'How to communicate with the citizens' is part of the EU Action Plan on terrorism. It is also a priority of the Netherlands presidency. We know that this information and communication with the citizens must balance the true risk of terrorist attacks and the negative consequences of fear. It is important that this information fosters resiliency. Mental health professionals need to prepare for a terrorist attack, but in a special way. Most victims won't need a professional to feel better. Social cohesion is both

pre- and post incident widely advocated. Social support mitigates the fear and helps people to recover.

There are three crucial problems addressed in this project.

1. How to inform and communicate with citizens, both pre and post attack in a way that resilience is fostered (good word??)
2. How to involve children?
3. Which community-based interventions can be used by professionals?

Approach

The Impact Foundation has developed an approach that on a national base has proven to be successful in gathering scientific knowledge and best practices and making them understandable and available to diverse target groups and promoting cooperation between interested parties. The methods of this European project will follow the same lines. We'll use already existing informal European networks in the field of Civil Protection, Health and Terrorism and bring them together. So we create a new informal expertise network on psychosocial aspects of terrorism, but backed by already existing networks to avoid double work. We'll take care for exchange of best-practices; so we build on what already exists in an effective and efficient way. We'll support these best practices with scientific knowledge. Dissemination of knowledge and expertise will take place in a final conference with different themed working groups with an active learning style. Above that, we'll use our online knowledge database (realisation of the international function in December 2004) to make the knowledge readily available for everyone. This international online knowledge database will serve as a knowledge provider in a European context and is one of the ways that will provide sustainability on the results of the project, ongoing after the end date. Also the network will keep on functioning after the end date. We'll produce concrete, operational manuals on public information, teaching material and community-based interventions for mental health professionals.

Activities

In-depth study by scientific literature search, site-visits and semi-structured expert interviews results in the production of a preliminary compendium. This will be presented in a core group meeting in Amsterdam in October 19 2005 on the conference of the European Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, aimed at detecting gaps, inconsistencies and needs. A final compendium will be produced as a base for the final conference in summer 2006. Here the gathered knowledge will be disseminated, and experiences in the different member states will be exchanged. At last we'll develop and produce the final products and final EU report.

Results

It is important that this project leads to operational outcomes and not only more paper. There will be three concrete final products of this project.

1. A manual for a public campaign which can be used in all member states, after adjusting it for cultural differences.
2. Teaching materials and teaching modules (teaching package) for primary school children (age 9, 10, 11, 12) to support teachers in their capability to learn children cope with their emotions and reactions after terrorism.
3. Strategies for community-based interventions for professionals.

Dissemination of results by

- Final dissemination conference
- A pre-conference about the project will be held before the ESTSS-conference on October 19, 2005 in Amsterdam
- Newsletters
- International online knowledge database (ongoing also after the end date of this project)
- Informal European platform/network on psychosocial aspects of terrorist attacks and the already existing networks/working groups on civil protection (including their train the trainers-project) and health. Ongoing after the end date of this project)

Timetable

The project has started in June 2005 and will take two years from then.

More information:

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Fact sheets Terrorism - how to move on

The attacks of 11 March 2004 in Spain and the London Bombings in July 2005 have brought the terrorist threat closer to the Netherlands. The Dutch government has stated that terrorist acts cannot be ruled out in this country either. If an attack occurs, it is anticipated that there will be a great need for know-how and information. In preparation for this, Impact has compiled scientific insights, practical advice and experience in the field of psychosocial care in a series of fact sheets entitled 'Terrorisme, en dan verder ...' 'Terrorism - how to move on'. These fact sheets are intended both for the general public and for professionals (working, for example, in healthcare, legal services or journalism). You can download these factsheets from our website: www.impact-kenniscentrum.nl

Information for the general public

In the series Terrorism - how to move on... the following fact sheets for the general public have appeared

- **What should you do after an attack?**
Short, practical pieces of advice
- **Frequently Asked Questions**
Answers to eight frequently asked questions
- **Taking care of yourself**

Information and advice

- **Children and attacks**

Information and advice about children

Information for professionals

The following fact sheets have appeared for professionals who work for example in healthcare, legal services or journalism

- **Working with those affected**

Information and advice.

- **The first few weeks**

Information and advice about the first few weeks after an attack.

- **Ethnic minorities and attacks**

Information and advice for relief workers and emergency workers

- **Ethnic minorities and attacks**

Information and advice for policy makers.