



UNION EUROPÉENNE DES MÉDECINS SPÉCIALISTES

EUROPEAN UNION OF MEDICAL SPECIALISTS

*The UEMS Section of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*

To Their Excellencies  
Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport and  
Secretary of State of Health  
Edith Schippers  
Martijn van Rijn  
20350  
2500 EJ Den Haag  
The Netherlands

31 January 2014

Your Excellencies,

UEMS CAP has become aware that there are proposals to radically change the way in which child and adolescent psychiatry services are to be provided to children and young people in the Netherlands. We believe very strongly that these proposed changes will be detrimental to patients.

### **Access to care and the right to be taken care of**

Placing the specialist child and adolescent psychiatrist outside the insured care system will seriously jeopardize any guarantee of delivery of appropriate, safe and equitable specialist mental health care for children in the Netherlands. There is no argument to treat children with mental disorders differently than otherwise diseased minors. The pathway of care for these children across the lifespan mental health services will be disrupted, which is illogical because the majority of severe mental disorders present themselves before an individual is 18 year old. The safe chain will be broken.

### **Supervision and assurance of the quality of care**

We understand that the Ministry of Health believes that the very act of placing all professionals in one part of the system will of itself insure delivery of best safe care. The key question therefore is how quality assurance of the core competences and skills of all these workers will be assessed, measured and evaluated. Whilst an emphasis has been placed on strict national standards being maintained, the municipalities will be given considerable discretion. This tension is a matter of great concern. Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, as a medical specialty, is obliged to follow international guidelines, care standards and evidence-based methods. This requires a national policy.

### **Legal protection & privacy**

The International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) indicates that the State has the obligation to ensure every child has the protection and care that is necessary for his or her well-being (art. 3 paragraph 2). Every child, no matter where they are in the Netherlands, who needs psychiatric care, should be able to count on uniform quality of the various medical professionals who provide this treatment, and of the

institutions involved. The fact that the criteria judging this quality may not appear in the proposed new legislation de facto means the introduction of a gross inequality. This appears to contravene the CRC where it is emphasized that a key responsibility of the State is to provide legal protection to those who are most vulnerable and dependent in this case, children with child mental health problems.

### **Scientific research & education**

The standard of care in the Netherlands is high, while the quality of scientific research in the field is among the best internationally. The large amount of international (European) grants given to Dutch groups illustrates the strong position of the academic departments. Weakening this position would have an impact beyond the Dutch borders. Greater separation between child and adolescent psychiatry and adult psychiatry will seriously weaken the harmonization and cooperation in scientific research which is always for the prime purpose of patient benefit irrespective of age. Research is also pivotal to contributing to the education to become a psychiatrist. In addition, the embedding of the training for child and adolescent psychiatrist (as one of the fields within psychiatric general training) in the medical field will be lost. Furthermore, it restricts further scientific research into proven effective forms of prevention, early interventions, intervention and evidence based treatment with proven beneficial outcomes for children. We know that colleagues in child psychiatry in the Netherlands have, are and will be committed to working with the Ministry and all agencies that will enable the provision of consistent, equitable, best care for children in the Netherlands. We therefore ask you to very seriously reconsider you current proposals which we are convinced will damage the mental health of children in the Netherlands.

Such is my concern that I am alerting the European Psychiatric Association and the World Psychiatric Association to these proposed changes.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Bailey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a period at the end.

Professor Dame Sue Bailey OBE DBE FRCPsych  
Chair, Section of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry  
European Union of Medical Specialists (UEMS)