

Memorandum of UEMS/CAP and European Academy of Pediatrics on immigrant youth

It is a matter of fact that many children and adolescents living in Europe have an immigrant background. Either they migrated themselves or they were born to immigrant families. The number of immigrants living in Europe has been consistently increased over the last two decades. This instance should be of particular importance for designing conditions to promote adolescents in Europe in general.

Being responsible also for adolescents, UEMS/CAP and the European Academy of Pediatrics have worked out the following Memorandum to give aid and orientation for designing health (in a wider sense) promotion in this age group.

Immigrant youth are adolescents facing a lot of developmental tasks as other adolescents, too. There are obviously a lot of individual differences in how adolescents cope with developmental tasks. These capacities are determined by individual social background and by mastery of previous developmental epochs.

Immigrant youth face the extra demand to deal with the acculturation process, which is not only subject to their home country and culture characteristics, but also to the perceived characteristics of the host country. **The process of acculturation entails resources and risks in the person, the family or in the environment. It is well known that cultural and social-political contexts in the host country like, for example, discrimination, integration or marginalization attitudes, have great influence on the acculturation process of immigrant youth. Perceived discrimination in the host country has been identified as an important predictor of how well youth cope with developmental tasks.**

Needs of immigrant youth vary considerably from individual to individual and from group to group. The burden on immigrant youth doesn't only come from the fact of migration. Unfortunately, the relative valence of different social conditions, of which immigration is only one among many others, is not studied systematically and efficiently enough.

With regard to help systems the following essentials should have priority.

- Communication problems have to be solved
- Interventions should be oriented towards developmental tasks taking into consideration behavior and/or experience, the process of self-perception shaping , social relations regarding family and peers
- Examination of individual cultural backgrounds and traumatic experiences
- Focus on resources or risks in the person, family and host country environment
- Importance of an ethnically balanced neighborhood and schools

Immigrant youth should be addressed in natural settings as families, schools, during leisure time and in the community.

In general, this memorandum advocates a policy for immigrant youth which is per se integrated in help systems for adolescents of the host community/host country. These services should be sensitive and adaptive to the acculturations process regarding additional specific needs of immigrants' youth.