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Study objectives: The suicide rate in Hungary is high in international comparison. The four-level intervention program of the European Alliance Against Depression (EAAD) is designed to improve the care of depression and to prevent suicidal behaviour. Our aim was evaluating the effectiveness of the EAAD on suicide rates in different areas.

Method: The program was implemented in Szolnok, a town in a region of Hungary with exceptionally high suicide rate and in Miskolc, a town in a region with high unemployment and also high suicide rate. Effectiveness was assessed by comparing changes in suicide rates before to after the start of the intervention in the intervention region to corresponding changes of national suicide rates. In addition, changes in suicide rates were compared to those in a control region (Szeged). In Miskolc also the number of suicide attempts was used to measure the effectiveness of the program.

Results: For the duration of the program and the follow-up year, suicide rates in Szolnok were significantly lower than the average of the previous three years ($p=.0076$). The suicide rate thus went down from 30.1 per 100,000 in 2004 to 13.2 in 2005 (-56.1 %), 14.6 in 2006 (-51.4 %) and 12.0 in 2007 (-60.1 %). This decrease of annual suicide rates in Szolnok after the onset of the intervention was significantly stronger than that observed in Hungary ($p=.017$). Men had the same decrease in suicide rates as women in Szolnok. In Miskolc we observed changes in the types of suicide attempts, especially among males.