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Health spending in Europe in 2010 fell for the first time in decades, says a joint Commission/OECD Report



European Commission
Press release
Brussels, 16 November 2012

Health spending per person and as a percentage of GDP fell across the European Union in 2010. This is one of the many findings in the "**Health at a Glance: Europe 2012**", a new joint report by the OECD and the European Commission. From an annual average growth rate of 4.6% between 2000 and 2009, health spending per person fell to -0.6% in 2010. **This is the first time that health spending has fallen in Europe since 1975.**

Other findings from the report include:

- Health spending as a share of GDP was highest in the Netherlands (12%) in 2010, followed by France and Germany (11.6%). The share of GDP allocated to health was 9.0% on average across EU countries, down from 9.2% in 2009.
- Doctors: The number of doctors per capita has increased in almost all EU member states over the past decade from an average 2.9 per 1 000 population in 2000 to 3.4 in 2010. Growth was particularly rapid in Greece and the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, future shortages of health workforce remain a serious concern in many European countries.
- Generalist/Specialist balance: There are now many more specialists than GPs in nearly all countries due to lack of interest in traditional "family medicine" practice and a growing remuneration gap. The slow growth or reduction in generalists raises concerns about access to primary care for certain population groups.

The full press release is here attached.

The report "Health at a Glance Europe 2012" can be downloaded or ordered here:
www.oecd.org/health/healthataglanceeurope.htm



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In **Ireland**, health spending fell 7.9% in 2010, compared with an average annual growth rate of 6.5% between 2000 and 2009. In **Estonia**, health expenditure per person dropped by 7.3% in 2010, following growth of over 7% per year from 2000 to 2009, with reductions in both public and private spending. In **Greece**, estimates suggest that health spending per person fell 6.7% in 2010, reversing annual growth of 5.7% between 2000 and 2009.

While the report does not show any worsening health outcome due to the crisis, it also underlines that efficient health spending is necessary to ensure the fundamental goal of health systems in EU countries.

Annual average growth rate in health expenditure per capita, in real terms, 2000 to 2010 (or nearest year)

	2000-2009	2009-2010
Ireland	6.5	-7.9
Estonia	7.2	-7.3
Greece	5.7	-6.7
Lithuania	8.9	-5.0
Czech Republic	6.0	-4.4
Denmark	3.2	-2.1
Slovenia	3.9	-2.0
Spain	4.1	-0.9
EU-24	4.6	-0.6
United Kingdom	4.9	-0.5
Cyprus	2.7	-0.2
Austria	2.2	0.1
Belgium	3.8	0.2
Finland	3.9	0.4
Poland	7.1	0.5
Portugal	1.8	0.5
France	2.1	0.8
Italy	1.3	1.0
Sweden	3.4	1.2
Netherlands	5.5	2.0
Hungary	3.1	2.2
Slovak Republic	10.9	2.4
Germany	2.0	2.7
Malta	3.5	3.6
Romania	5.6	4.2
Iceland	1.6	-7.1
Norway	2.9	-2.0
Croatia	3.1	-1.2
Switzerland	2.0	1.4

Source: *Health at a Glance: Europe 2012* (based on OECD Health Data 2012; Eurostat Statistics Database; WHO Global Expenditure Database)

Spending on disease prevention accounts for only 3% of total health spending

Governments, under pressure to protect funding for acute care, are cutting other expenditures such as public health and prevention programmes. In 2010, the expenditure was 3.2% less than the year before. This means that on average across EU countries, only 3% of a shrinking health budget was allocated to prevention and public health programmes in areas such as immunisation, smoking, alcohol drinking, nutrition and physical activity. **The report emphasizes that spending on prevention now can be much more cost-effective than treating diseases in the future.**

More than half of adults in the European Union are now overweight, and 17% are obese. Obesity rates have doubled since 1990 in many European countries, and now range from 8% in **Romania** and **Switzerland** to over 25% in **Hungary** and the **United Kingdom**. Obesity and smoking are the major risk factors for heart disease and stroke which accounted for over one-third (36%) of all deaths across EU countries in 2010.

The OECD and European Commission's **Health at a Glance: Europe 2012** presents key indicators of health status, determinants of health, health care resources and activities, quality of care, health expenditure and financing in 35 European countries, including the 27 EU member states, 5 candidate countries and 3 EFTA countries.

Other findings from the report include:

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- **Doctors:** The number of doctors per capita has increased in almost all EU member states over the past decade from an average 2.9 per 1 000 population in 2000 to 3.4 in 2010. Growth was particularly rapid in **Greece** and the **United Kingdom**. Nevertheless, future shortages of health workforce remain a serious concern in many European countries.
- **Generalist/Specialist balance:** There are now many more specialists than GPs in nearly all countries due to lack of interest in traditional "family medicine" practice and a growing remuneration gap. The slow growth or reduction in generalists raises concerns about access to primary care for certain population groups.

For further details see the electronic version of the report which is available at:

<http://ec.europa.eu/health/reports/european/>

www.oecd.org/health/healthataglanceeurope.htm

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