

Brussels, 8<sup>th</sup> July 2011  
PR/2011/12

**EuroHealthNet - *“Policymakers in EU states and institutions need to act now for mental and physical wellbeing in national and EU policies”***

**The BBC has reported a study suggesting that the financial crisis "almost certainly" led to an increase in suicides across Europe. The analysis by US and UK researchers found a rise in suicides was recorded among working age people from 2007 to 2009 in nine of the 10 nations studied. The increases varied between 5% and 17% for under 65s after a period of falling suicide rates, The Lancet reported.**

Researchers said investment in welfare systems was the key to keeping rates down. In particular, they argued supporting people back into work or having programmes to stop them losing their jobs in the first place was more important than giving them benefits. The team used World Health Organization data to compare rates in the 10 countries, including the UK. During the period, there was a rise in unemployment by a third. Only Austria saw suicide rates fall. This was put down to the country being less exposed to the financial crisis than the others. Of the risers, Finland fared best while Greece had the worst record. The UK saw a rise of 10% to 6.75 suicides per 100,000 people.

The report comes after a BBC investigation earlier this year found there had been a rise in anti-depressant prescribing during the financial crisis. Prescriptions for drugs such as Prozac rose by more than 40% over the past four years with GPs saying more and more people were coming to them with money worries.

EuroHealthNet director Clive Needle added *“This shows policymakers in EU states and institutions need to act now for mental and physical wellbeing in national and EU policies: starting right at the top with the EU 2020 process. It is not good enough to just go for growth and hope recessions do not recur – they are cyclical and systemic. We know enough now to act to support individual and community resilience – as the example of Austria shows, to make economies work for people not vice versa. We call on the EC to urgently review its core economic and social programmes for this decade to protect and promote wellbeing – the health of people comes before business profits.”*

The [report](#) of the Social Protection Committee on the social dimension of the EU2020 strategy confirms this consideration when it underlines: “Even two years into the crisis it is still difficult to give a full picture of the effects on the health status and health-related behaviour of specific population groups. It remains difficult to evaluate the specific impact of the crisis compared to other possible factors or already existing health trends. However, Member States have identified negative impacts of the crisis on citizens' mental health status, notably in the following areas: depression, anxiety, increased alcohol consumption and suicidal behaviours. **In some Member States particularly affected by the crisis provisional data show a clear and very worrying increase in suicides.**

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*EuroHealthNet is a not-for-profit network of regional and national agencies responsible and accountable for health promotion, public health and disease prevention in Europe. Its aim is to improve the health of European citizens by striving for a healthier Europe with greater health equity between and within countries. EuroHealthNet does that by supporting projects and policy development together with its members and the EU institutions; by exchanging information and by communication in and beyond its network.*

*More information available at:*

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