



# Building policy responses – the EU dimension

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# Health in times of economic recession

## ■ Direct and immediate impacts

- Impact on **people's health** – job insecurity, lower disposable income and over-indebtedness. This lead to more psychosocial stress and rise in mental health problems. Economic hardship often also results in switch to less healthy lifestyles (i.e. tobacco, alcohol, sweets) and less out-of-pocket spending on health.
- More profound adverse impact on the most **vulnerable** and disadvantaged ( expansion of poverty and ill-health)
- Impact on **health systems** – strain on public spending but also problems of access (bigger demand) and universal coverage

# Health in times of economic recession

## ■ Indirect and long term impacts

- Likely cuts on health budgets: less provisions of mental health promotion, on preventive action and less availability of infrastructures, support and care.
- Lifestyle and spending patterns change: continuation of unhealthy behaviours adopted during crisis



# Driving European recovery

## Three main elements:

- **Restoring and maintaining a stable and reliable financial system**
- **Supporting the real economy**
- **Supporting people through the crisis**
  - Alleviating the human cost of the crisis
    - maintaining existing jobs & labour mobility
    - supporting the most vulnerable
    - strengthening social protection and invest in social and health infrastructure (i.e. European Globalisation Adjustment Fund and European Social Fund)
  - An Employment Summit for Europe – May'09 in Prague



# European actions in detail

- **Open Method of Coordination (OMC) on Social Protection and Social Inclusion and Social Protection Committee (SPC)** – instruments for the joint consideration of the social impact of the crisis
  - A first joint assessment of the social impact of the crisis by the SPC and the Commission was presented on 4 March;
  - The Commission is also funding research on the measurement of mental health problems in the EU, to serve as basis for a technical discussion on defining possible indicators under the OMC



# European actions in detail

- **The European Pact for Mental Health and Well-being – framework to promote exchange & cooperation on Mental Health challenges and opportunities**
  - Five thematic conferences in 2009/10, jointly organised by Presidencies/Member States and DG SANCO:
    - 29-30.09.09      **Mental Health in Youth and Education** Stockholm
    - 10-11.12.09      **Preventing Depression and Suicide** Budapest;
    - 21-22.04.10      **Mental Health in Older People** Madrid/Toledo
    - 08-09.11.10 (tbc) **Mental Health in Workplace Settings** Berlin
    - 2 sem 2010 /(tbc) **Combating stigma and social exclusion**
  - + two associated events in May'09: „Gender aspects in Mental Health“ (Brussels) and „Destigmatisation and Improving Quality of Care in Psychiatry“ (Prague)
  
- **Communication on reducing health inequalities in the EU – planned for autumn 2009**



# European actions in detail

Continuation of ongoing actions in the area of health:

- Focus on health determinants – alcohol, tobacco, nutrition
- Integrated approach to health – Health in All Policies
- Better Regulation:
  - evidence based policy making – Health Impact Assessment
  - focus on areas of the Europe's biggest Added Value
  - innovative instruments (public private partnerships)
- Support for dynamic health systems – Health Technology Assessment, e-health, European reference networks for rare diseases

## Key messages

- **Health is Wealth** – now more than ever
- **Avoiding inequalities from growing further**
  - solidarity remains a fundamental value
- **Ring-fencing the vulnerable** – risk of expansion of poverty
- **Building Europe's Mental Capital**
  - short-term actions need to take into account long-term objectives





**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!**

**Better Regulation for Healthier,  
Safer and more Confident Citizens**

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