

# EU adopts Green Paper on Mental Health

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press release 17 Oct 2005 by European Commission ([original and other references](http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/1292&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en)) (<http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/1292&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en> )

Mental health: Commission adopts Green Paper on illness affecting 1 in four adults

The European Commission today adopted a Green Paper on Mental Health to tackle mental illnesses which now affect over one in four adults in the European Union. The Green Paper, aims to launch a public consultation on how better to tackle mental illness and promote mental well-being in the EU. Mental illness affects over 27% of European adults every year, and is responsible for the majority of the annual 58 000 deaths by suicide, more than the number who die from motor vehicle traffic accidents. Moreover, mental health levels can have a significant influence on the economic and social welfare of society. Until recently, however, the importance of mental health has been largely overshadowed by other public health matters. The Commission is therefore initiating a wide ranging debate on the issue, to highlight the importance of mental well-being and to examine how best to develop a comprehensive EU strategy on mental health.

Markos Kyprianou, Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection, said: “More than one in four Europeans suffer from mental illness every year, and it can cost our economies up to four per cent of GDP in lost productivity and other social costs. I can think of no other disease that would remain so low profile if such a high percentage of the population were struck by it. Mental health has been swept under the carpet for too long. It is a crucial component of overall public health, an important factor in societal well-being and a vital part of a competitive economy. The Commission is determined to raise awareness of this problem and to work towards improving the mental health of the EU population as a whole.”

Over 27% of adults in the EU suffer from some form of mental illness every year. Depression and anxiety disorders are the most common mental problems experienced, and studies have estimated that by 2020, depression will be the highest ranking cause of disease in the developed world. In terms of economic impact, mental ill health costs the EU 3-4% of its GDP through lost productivity and additional burdens on sectors such as health, education and justice.

There are large disparities between Member States when it comes to mental health. Suicide rates range from 44 per 100 000 people in Lithuania to 3.6 in Greece, while the number of involuntary placements in mental health institutions is 40 times higher in Finland than in Portugal. The share of spending on mental health ranges from more than 13 % of the national health budget in Luxembourg to just 2% in Slovakia.

The Green Paper on Mental Health proposes three main areas for EU level action:

## Opening up a dialogue with Member States to agree on an action plan on mental health

Launching an EU Platform on Mental Health. This would bring together a wide range of stakeholders to look at how to integrate mental health into different sectors and EU policies, and how to develop ethical considerations such as fundamental rights of mental illness sufferers.

Building up mental health information resources at EU level, including monitoring trends, collecting data, and identifying best practice

The proposals outlined in the Green Paper are part of the Commission's follow-up to the World Health Organisation (WHO) Ministerial Conference on Mental Health held in Helsinki in January 2005, where the 52 Member States in the WHO European Region and the European Commission endorsed the Mental Health Declaration and Action Plan for Europe.

On 24 October, the Commission will host a conference on Mental Health in Luxembourg, to officially launch the consultation process. Commissioner Kyprianou, a number of Member States' health ministers, MEPs and WHO Regional Director for Europe, Marc Danzon, will be among those present at the conference to contribute to the debate.

Governments, NGOs, stakeholders and individual citizens are invited to comment on the proposed areas for action outlined in the Green Paper, and on the role of the EU in addressing the issue of mental health. The consultation will continue until 30 April 2006, after which the Commission will use the input received to draw up a proposal on an EU-wide Mental Health Strategy. For further information, see:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/mental\\_health\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_determinants/life_style/mental_health_en.htm) (  
[http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/mental\\_health\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_determinants/life_style/mental_health_en.htm))

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