

Foreword

This second edition of *Health at a Glance: Europe* presents the most recent key indicators of health and health systems across 35 countries: the 27 European Union member states, five candidate countries and three European Free Trade Association countries. The report comes at a difficult time for European health systems. The economic crisis is increasing poverty, unemployment and stress, all of which are associated with worse health outcomes, yet public and private budgets are under great strain. The report highlights the marked slowdown (sometimes even reduction) in health spending over recent years in many countries, as part of broader efforts to reduce large budgetary deficits. If the report does not yet show any worsening health outcomes due to the crisis, there is no cause for complacency – it takes time for poor social conditions or poor quality care to take its toll from people’s health. Policy makers have often done what they could to ensure that access to high quality care remains the norm in Europe; whether this is enough to protect the health of the population will only become clear in years to come.

The indicators presented in this report are based largely on the European Community Health Indicators (ECHI), a set of indicators used by the European Commission to guide the development of health information systems in Europe. Additional indicators examine health expenditure trends as well as quality of care, building on OECD expertise in these domains.

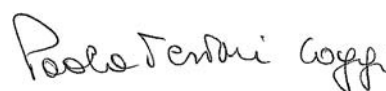
The publication at hand reflects the long and fruitful collaboration between the OECD and the European Commission in the development and reporting of health statistics. Since 2005, a joint data collection between the OECD, the European Commission and the World Health Organization has improved the availability of comparable data on health expenditure, based on a common System of Health Accounts. Furthermore, since 2010, these three organisations have gathered additional data on the health workforce as well as on the physical and technical resources required to deliver health services.

The OECD and the European Commission will continue to work closely together to improve the quality and comparability of data to monitor population health and the performance of health systems across European countries.

In the meantime, we hope that this publication will be useful to you and that it will stimulate action to improve the health of European citizens by learning from each others’ experience.



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