



PRESS RELEASE

EU Project unveils obesity & smoking trends across Europe and shows how primary prevention is the key to a healthy future

Brussels, 22 September 2015: Results of the EConDA (Economics of Chronic Diseases) EU-funded project will be announced today in Brussels at a conference bringing together EU policymakers, health professionals, health economists and health stakeholders from the EU arena.

The project, which lasted 2.5 years, showed how 'upstream' prevention interventions focusing on reducing people's exposure to risk factors before a chronic disease has occurred is generally more cost-effective in terms of healthcare savings – including social care, welfare costs and losses in productivity - than treating an individual for a chronic condition.

Chronic diseases are the first cause of mortality in Europe, causing the death of 9 out of 10 citizens. They also represent a major economic burden with a total estimated cost the EU economy of € 700 billion annually.

According to EConDA, obesity rates will be increasing across Europe and in all social groups, with better educated people projected to be less obese than those with lower education levels. This will have an important impact on health inequalities, with the less educated being subject to a greater burden of obesity-related chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes.

Portugal represents an interesting exception to this trend, as the social gradient is predicted to reverse by 2050, with the more educated men and women projected to be more obese or overweight than those with lower education levels. A similar pattern in the future is predicted for obesity in the Netherlands.

More encouragingly, by 2050, smoking prevalence is forecast to decrease largely as a result of important policy measures such as tobacco taxation and bans on smoking in public places. Provided that these and other policies are maintained to prevent take up of smoking and help existing smokers to give up, this downward trend is set to continue.

A user-friendly tool has been developed for researchers and policy makers to test the impact of interventions which aim to reduce obesity and smoking on the future burden of chronic diseases. This tool can be downloaded here: <http://econdaproject.eu/tools.php>

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Notes to Editor

Economics of Chronic Diseases (EConDA) 2 ½ -year (April 2013 - October 2015) project co-funded by the European Commission Public Health Programme.

The consortium includes partners from 8 European countries.

- Associated Partners: UK Health Forum (Project Leader), European Heart Network (Belgium), European Society of Cardiology (France), Health Equalities Group (UK), International Diabetes Federation Europe (Belgium), Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (Lithuania), National Institute of Health Doutor Ricardo Jorge, IP (Portugal), University of Groningen (Netherlands),

- Collaborating Partners: World Health Organization, Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development, European Society for Medical Oncology (Switzerland), European Cancer Organisation (Belgium), European Respiratory Society (Belgium), European Kidney Health Alliance (Belgium), European Association for the Study of the Liver (Switzerland), University of Helsinki (Finland), Foundation of European Nurses in Diabetes (UK),

The specific objectives of EConDA are to:

1. Seek consensus among relevant experts, policy makers and international organisations on the methodology for measuring cost-effectiveness of interventions to prevent, screen and treat chronic diseases taking into consideration the cost of externalities.
2. Develop a demonstration model for integrated approaches to address cost-effectiveness of various interventions for chronic disease prevention, particularly to demonstrate the differential effects of interventions on various population sub groups.

EConDA used a microsimulation model initially developed by the UK Health Forum (formally the National Heart Forum) for the Tackling Obesities enquiry (Foresight, 2007). This model aimed to show how the costs of chronic diseases in 8 EU countries will alter both currently and into the future based on existing chronic disease trends. The project focused on cardiovascular disease, diabetes, respiratory diseases and two risk factors: obesity and tobacco in 8 EU countries: Bulgaria, Finland, Greece, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, and the United Kingdom.

www.econdaproject.eu