

Europe Can Make a Difference Against Health Inequalities



ECDC Director says "Europe can make a difference against health inequalities", at an informal Meeting of Ministers of Health .

An informal Meeting of Ministers of Health, one of the major events related to the development of EU policy in the field of health, took place in Sopot (Poland) on 5-6th July. ECDC Director Marc Sprenger gave a speech presenting evidence of health inequalities in the EU, as well as several options for intervention.

ECDC's work shows that social determinants play an important role in many European epidemics. Infectious diseases cause 7 percent of deaths in the EU, and their importance is even higher if we consider the wider burden of these diseases. Therefore, 'Targeted intervention against infectious diseases is a cost effective way to reduce health inequalities', states Dr Sprenger.

The current financial crisis will most likely worsen health inequalities in the Member States. In this scenario, Europe can really make a difference. The ECDC Director proposes several actions: First of all, it is necessary to address the underlying economic, social and environmental determinants of vulnerability to infectious diseases; Childhood vaccination programmes for vulnerable groups need to be strengthened, and vulnerable groups need to be targeted in relation to any relevant diseases.

ECDC can provide knowledge, evidence and technical support to help Member States implement cost effective interventions to fight infectious diseases and health inequalities.

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