



## ***Health at a Glance: EUROPE 2014***

### **How does Italy compare?**

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#### **KEY FINDINGS**

- Italy's indicators of health status and quality of care remain among the best in the EU.
- Italy spent 9.2% of its GDP on health in 2012, slightly more than the EU average of 8.7%, but much less than the Netherlands, France and Germany which are all allocating over 11% of their GDP to health spending.
- While spending on pharmaceuticals has been reduced in Italy in recent years, further efforts are needed to reduce high rate of antibiotics prescriptions which poses a serious threat to public health.

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#### **Improvements in health status and quality of care**

Life expectancy has continued to increase in Italy in recent years and is second highest among the EU countries after Spain. Life expectancy at birth in Italy reached 82.4 years in 2012, more than three years above the EU average (79.2 years).

One of the factors that have contributed to the continued rise in life expectancy in Italy may be good quality of care for life-threatening conditions. *Health at a Glance: Europe 2014* shows, for example, that mortality rates following a hospital admission for a heart attack or stroke have been reduced significantly in Italy over the past decade and were amongst the lowest in the EU in 2011.

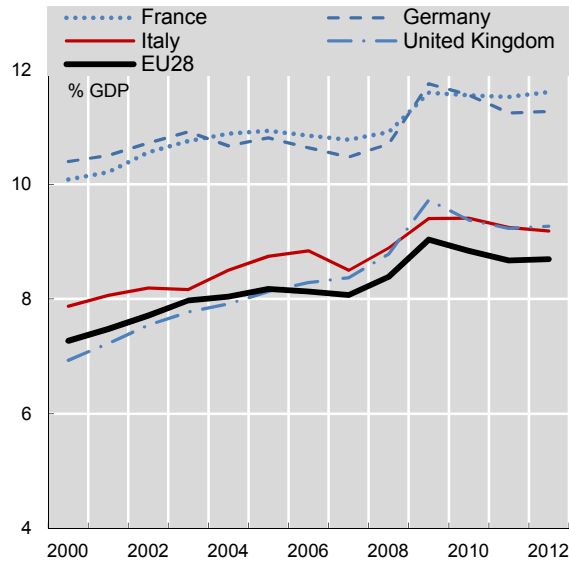
There have also been improvements in the management of chronic conditions such as asthma and diabetes in Italy, as reflected by a reduction in hospital admission rates for these conditions in recent years. This indicates better management of these chronic conditions in the primary care sector (outside hospital) and fewer complications requiring hospitalisation.

#### **Health expenditure**

Total health spending accounted for 9.2% of GDP in Italy in 2012, slightly more than the EU average of 8.7%, but well below the Netherlands (11.8%), France (11.6%) and Germany (11.3%).

As in many other EU countries, the share of GDP allocated to health in Italy reached a peak right after the start of the economic crisis as GDP fell more rapidly than health spending, but it has come down slightly since then as health expenditure per capita has declined in recent years.

## Health expenditure as a share of GDP, 2000-12, selected European countries



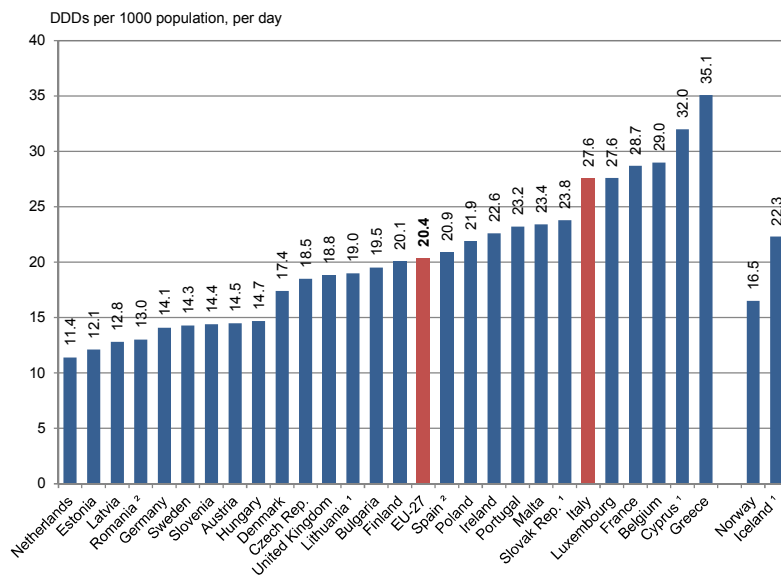
Source: OECD Health Statistics 2014.

## Pharmaceutical consumption

As in most other EU countries, spending on pharmaceuticals has been cut in recent years in Italy through a series of measures, including the implementation of tighter pharmaceutical budgets for regions, reductions in wholesale and pharmacy margins, and price cuts on generics based on reference pricing.

However, Italy's failure to reduce the prescription of antibiotics over the past decade is a concern. The consumption of antibiotics in Italy in 2011 was one-third higher than the EU average, and more than two-times higher than in the Netherlands. The over-use of antibiotics is a growing public health issue in Italy and other countries, as it increases the prevalence of resistant bacterial strains, which in turn reduces the effectiveness of conventional treatment, resulting in prolonged illness, greater risk of death, and higher costs.

## Overall volume of antibiotics prescribed, 2011



More information on **Health at a Glance: EUROPE 2014** is available at <http://www.oecd.org/els/health-at-a-glance-europe-23056088.htm>.

For more information on OECD's work on **Italy**, please visit <http://www.oecd.org/italy>.