

# Citizens' summary

## Proposal: Solidarity in health – reducing health inequalities in the EU

### WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

- Europeans live, on average, relatively long and healthy lives but there are **large differences in health between and within EU countries**.

For example – **life expectancy at birth** varies by **14 years** (men) and **8 years** (women) between EU countries.

- People with **lower educational levels, job status or income** have a tendency to die younger and be sick more often.

### WHAT EXACTLY WOULD CHANGE?

- The EU would take a series of **measures to help national authorities** address health inequalities.
- There would be regular **statistics and reporting** on the size of these inequalities in the EU and on **successful strategies** to reduce them.
- The EU would **assess the impact of its policies** on health inequalities and ensure that they help reduce them where possible.
- There would be better **information on possible EU funding** to help national authorities and other bodies address the inequalities.

### WHO WOULD BENEFIT AND HOW?

All of us, but especially those **areas and social groups most in need**.

### WHY DOES ACTION HAVE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EU?

While national authorities have primary responsibility for health and are best placed to reduce inequalities, the EU can help as follows:

- EU-wide data collection and monitoring is an economical way of **improving the knowledge base** for national policymaking and allows countries to **learn from each other**.
- Many **EU policies also affect health** - either *directly* (e.g. health and safety at work, consumer protection, public health policies) or *indirectly* (e.g. economic, regional, equal opportunities policies).

### WHEN IS THE PROPOSAL LIKELY TO COME INTO EFFECT?

Autumn 2009.