

## INTRODUCTION

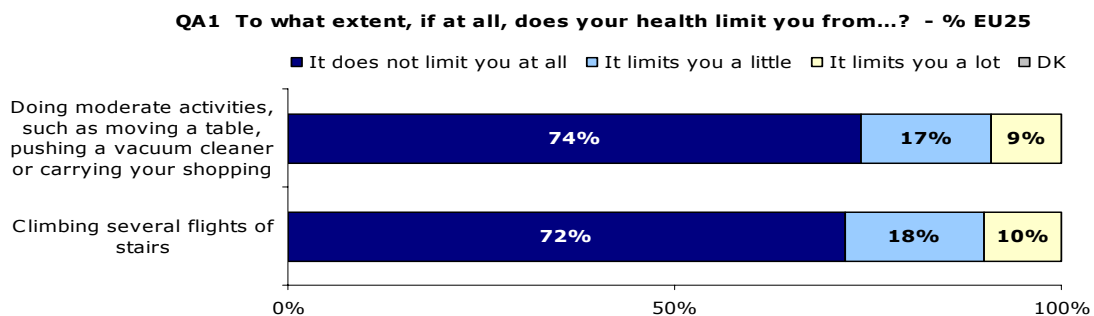
The questionnaire of this Eurobarometer survey is based, among other instruments, on the Short-Form-12 Health Survey, the SF-36 health survey and other instruments<sup>1</sup>. It measures general health status from the patient's point of view and includes eight concepts commonly represented in health surveys: physical functioning, role functioning, physical bodily pain, general health, vitality, social functioning, role functioning emotional and mental health.

The fieldwork of this survey was conducted between 7 December 2005 and 11 January 2006 and it covered the population aged 15 and over.

## 1 THE PRESENT SITUATION

### 1.1 Effects of the State of Health

**- A vast majority reports that their health does not limit them from doing moderate physical activities -**



**More than 7 out of 10 citizens of the EU state that their health does not limit them at all from doing moderate physical activities. Nevertheless, over a quarter asserts that their health limits them a little or a lot from doing moderate physical activities.** This is the case for 26% of respondents when it comes to moving furniture, vacuum-cleaning or carrying shopping bags and 28% think that their health poses limits for climbing up stairs.

The results of the socio-demographic analysis are to some degree foreseeable: **the strongest divider here appears to be the age of respondent. The elderly** (who can be presumed to have more often a low level of education and to be retired) encounter significantly more restrictions due to their state of health when carrying out moderate physical activities. Also, **women and house persons**, categories that also are likely to overlap, stand out from their counterparts for being more inclined to experience health limitations.

Moreover, **a link between mental well-being and physical health becomes visible.** Those who have either sought psychological help or have been treated for psychological or emotional health problems, state notably more frequently that their health limits them a lot from doing moderate physical activities.

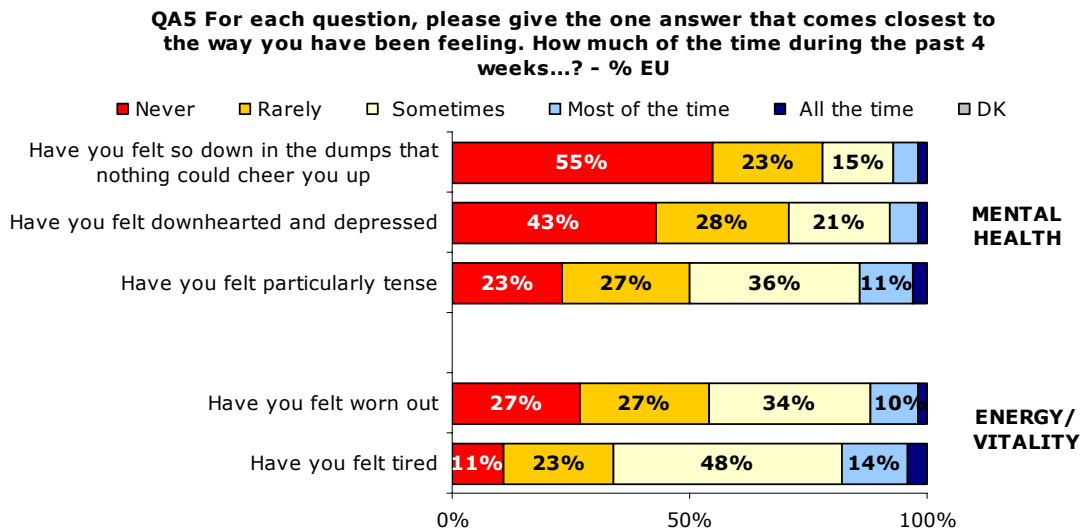
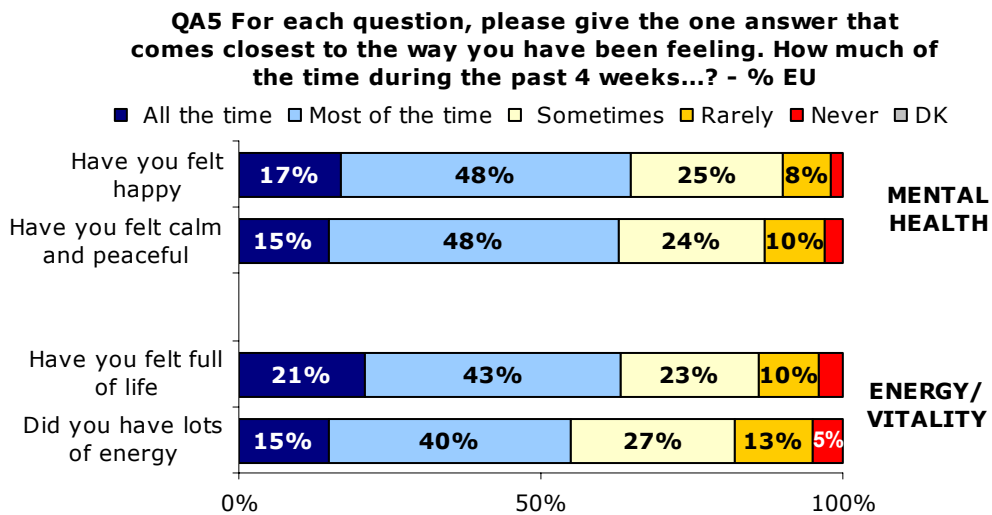
<sup>1</sup> See more in <http://www.sf-36.org/>

## 1.2 Mental Well-being over the Last 4 Weeks

- ***In general, Europeans experience their life in a positive light but a reasonable share feels tired –***

During the 4 weeks preceding the interview, **a considerable majority of the EU citizens have experienced positive and balanced feelings rather than negative emotions.**

64% have felt full of life all the time or most of the time and 55% have had a lot of energy while 65% have been happy and 63% have felt calm and peaceful.



When analysing negative emotions experienced during the past month, it is perceived that **Europeans are most likely to feel tired**. 18% of respondents indicate that they have been tired while 12% say they have been worn out most of the time or all the time, these feelings corresponding to the energy/vitality dimension. On the contrary, 55% state that they have not at all felt so down in the dumps that nothing could cheer them up and 43% indicate the same when it comes to feeling downhearted and depressed.

All in all, it can be said that **Europeans appear to have had mainly positive feelings recently**. However, **a substantial share indicates that they do not have lots of energy and they feel tired, the feelings related to energy/vitality dimension, at least sometimes**.

**Concerning the emotional dimension, in all countries polled, only a minority states that they have sometimes or more often felt so down in the dumps that nothing could cheer them up**. On the contrary, 90% of Swedes and 87% of Danes and Luxembourgish respondents assert that they have never or rarely felt completely down. 83% of Danes and 80% of German and Swedes say that they have never or rarely felt downhearted and depressed whereas this is the case for 49% of Turks and 54% of Latvians. **The three Nordic Countries again appear on the top of the ranks when feeling tense is discussed**. 70% of Finns, 66% of Danes and 65% of Swedes assert that they have felt tense only rarely while only 35% of Cypriots and Italians indicate the same.

**In terms of the energy/vitality dimension, it can be clearly observed that Europeans are often feeling tired**. Less than half of the respondents in each country state that they have been tired only rarely or never. The highest shares of those not feeling often tired are found in Belgium (43%), Denmark and Spain (40%) whereas about a quarter of Estonians and Croatians (26% each) indicate the same. The Danes (79%) also most often indicate that they have almost never felt worn out, followed by citizens of Finland (78%). On the contrary, only 35% of respondents in Croatia, 42% in the United Kingdom and 43% in Turkey express the same view.

No clear consistencies between the countries are observed. Nevertheless, it appears that **citizens of the Netherlands and Finland have experienced more often positive feelings during the 4 weeks preceding the interview**. Also, it can be said that **Italians and respondents in the three Baltic States seem to indicate slightly less frequently positive emotions**.

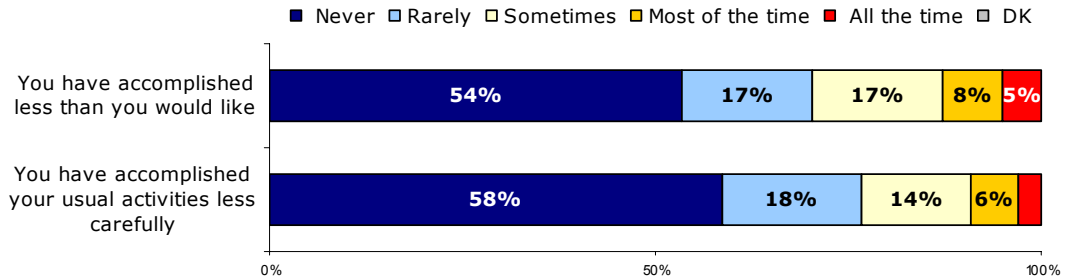
**Men, the young**, those who have **studied longer, students, managers and self-employed** and those who have **neither sought nor received help** for mental problems are more likely that their counterparts to state that they have felt positive all the time or most of the time. On the contrary, **women**, those **aged 55 and more**, those who have **finished their education at 15, the retired, house persons and unemployed** and those who **have sought or received psychological help** are more likely to describe their last 4 weeks in negative terms.

### 1.3 The Effects of Physical Health

#### 1.3.1 Level of Accomplishment

- **Over half of Europeans assert that they have no problems caused by physical health that would limit their usual activities -**

**QA2 During the past 4 weeks how much of the time have you had any of the following problems with your work or other regular activities as a result of your physical health? - % EU25**



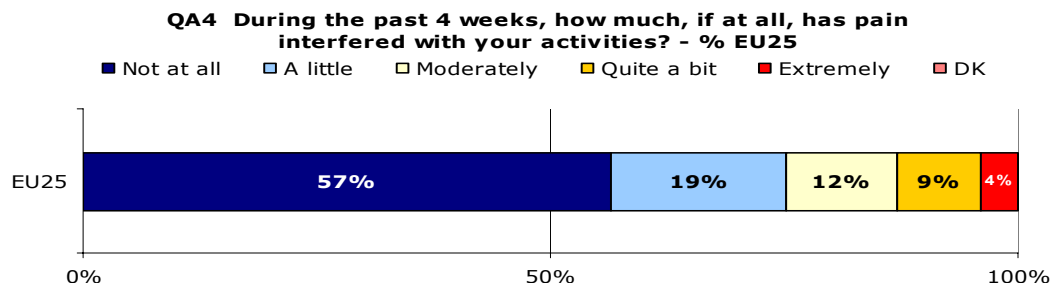
**54% of the EU citizen's state that their physical health has not prevented them from accomplishing the things they wanted to at work or in regular life.** 58% maintain that their physical condition has not led them to accomplishing their usual activities less carefully. However, about a third admits that they have sometimes or rarely experienced negative effects on the level of accomplishment (34%) or on the carefulness of accomplishments (32%).

Overall, it can be said that **for the majority of Europeans, their physical health bears no consequences on the level of accomplishment when it comes to their work or other regular activities. Altogether, in 15 out of 29 countries polled the majority maintains that their physical health has never made them to accomplish less than they would like** when it comes to their work or other regular activities.

Some interesting patterns emerge in the socio-demographic analysis. **Men** are slightly more likely than women to indicate that their physical health has no effect on their level of accomplishment or on how carefully they carry out their regular activities. This is also the case **the younger** the respondent is, **the longer the education** he/she has and for students and managers.

### 1.3.2 The Effect of Pain

- **For most of Europeans, pain does not interfere with their activities, or does so only a little -**



**The majority of EU citizens, 57%, state that pain has not at all interfered with their activities.** Only 4% of Europeans indicate that pain has interfered with their life to an extreme extent whereas 9% state that pain causes them problems quite a bit.

When interpreting this question it should be borne in mind that the results do not indicate how many respondents report having pain but, instead, for how many it has caused problems in their activities.

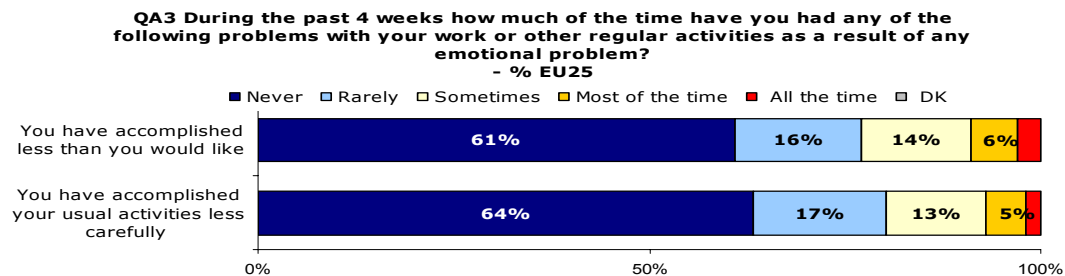
Some differences between the countries are observed. The Irish (71%), the British (67%) and Luxembourgish (66%) citizens indicate most often that pain does not at all limit them from doing their activities while this is the case for only 41% of citizens of the Czech Republic. **The number of those for whom pain causes extreme or quite a bit problems remains low.**

Again, the familiar socio-demographic patterns occur here. **Men, the young, well educated, students and managers** indicate more frequently that they have not felt pain. In addition, **the distinction between the groups of those who have sought psychological help or have been treated for psychological or emotional problems and those who have not reappears.**

## 1.4 The Effects of Emotional Problems

### 1.4.1 Level of Accomplishment

**- Over 3 in 5 respondents maintain that emotional problems do not deteriorate their level of accomplishment -**



**Over 3 in 5 Europeans announce that emotional problems have never affected their level of accomplishment while carrying out regular activities** when the 4 weeks before the interview are considered.

61% of respondents state that emotional problems have not led them to accomplish less and 64% indicate the same when it comes to the level of care they take with their usual activities. **Only a minor share of respondents admits that emotional problems have had an effect on their level of accomplishment. Again, at the country level clear differences are perceived.** Luxembourg (77%) is where the highest number of citizens indicate that emotional problems have never led them to accomplish less than they would have liked to, followed by 71% of the Spanish asserting the same. On the other hand, only 39% of Slovaks and 42% of Bulgarians agree with this opinion.

**The share of those considering that emotional problems affect all the time or most of the time the amount of things they carry out remains minor.**

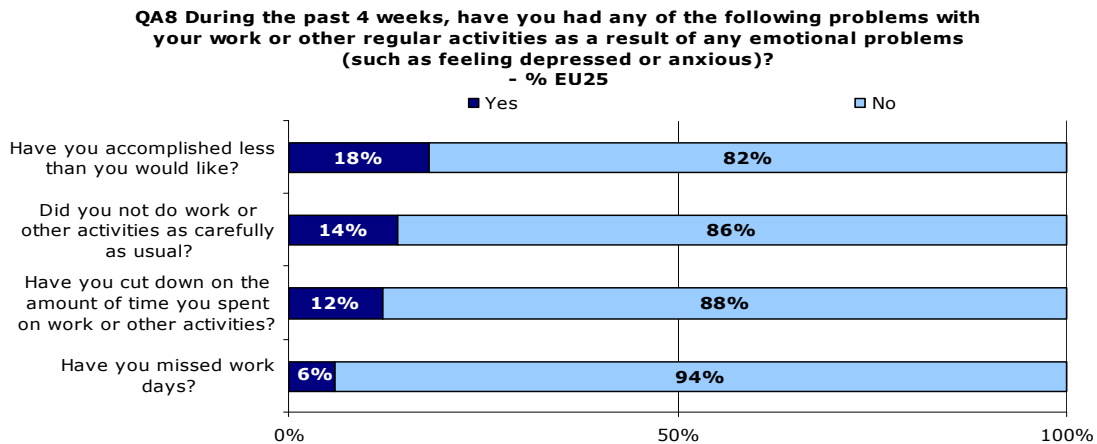
65% of respondents that have not searched psychological help indicate that emotional problems have never led them to accomplish less and 68% of them say the same for achieving things less carefully, the respective shares for those who

have either sought help or received treatment are 30% and 33%. The same pattern appears when those who have received treatment are considered.

**These results suggest that mental problems, when experienced, have a strong impact on the level of achievement when it comes to usual daily activities.**

#### 1.4.2 Effects on Working Life or other Regular Activities

##### **- The effects of emotional problems in working life remain limited -**



**The vast majority of EU citizens assert that emotional problems, such as feeling depressed or anxious, do not cause difficulties in their working life.**

94% of respondents maintain that they have not missed working days due to emotional problems while 88% state that they have not cut down the amount of time they have spent on work or other activities. 86% of European citizens indicate that they have not accomplished their tasks less carefully, and for 82% of respondents emotional problems have not led them to accomplish less than they would have liked.

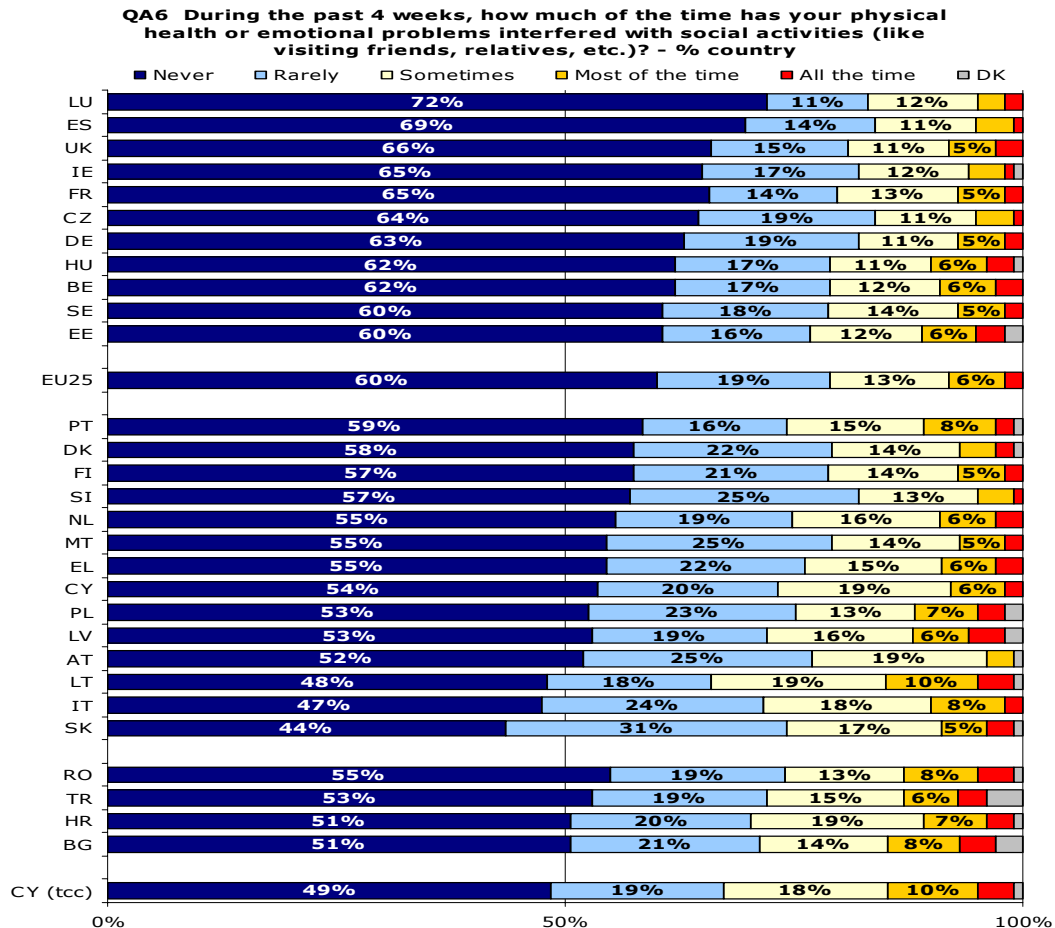
When the **focus is placed on the working age population** excluding house persons, the retired and students, it can be observed that the results are in parallel with the EU average except when it comes to accomplishing less. Furthermore, those who are unemployed tend to indicate more often that emotional problems have disturbed their regular activities than those who are working at present. Whether this implies that the unemployed have more emotional problems or whether emotional problems cause more often disturbance in daily activities for them, cannot be said. However, it might be presumed that **emotional problems might complicate to some extent the process of finding a work for the unemployed.**

**It can be concluded that mental ill health, when present, appears to have enormous negative effects on the way Europeans perform in their work or in other regular activities.**

#### 1.5 Problems with Social Activities

**- 3 in 5 Europeans state that their physical health or emotional problems do not interfere with their social activities -**

**60% of EU citizens assert that their physical health or emotional problems have not interfered with social activities.** However, more than 2 in 5 respondents admit that their physical or mental well being has to some extent had a negative effect on their social life.



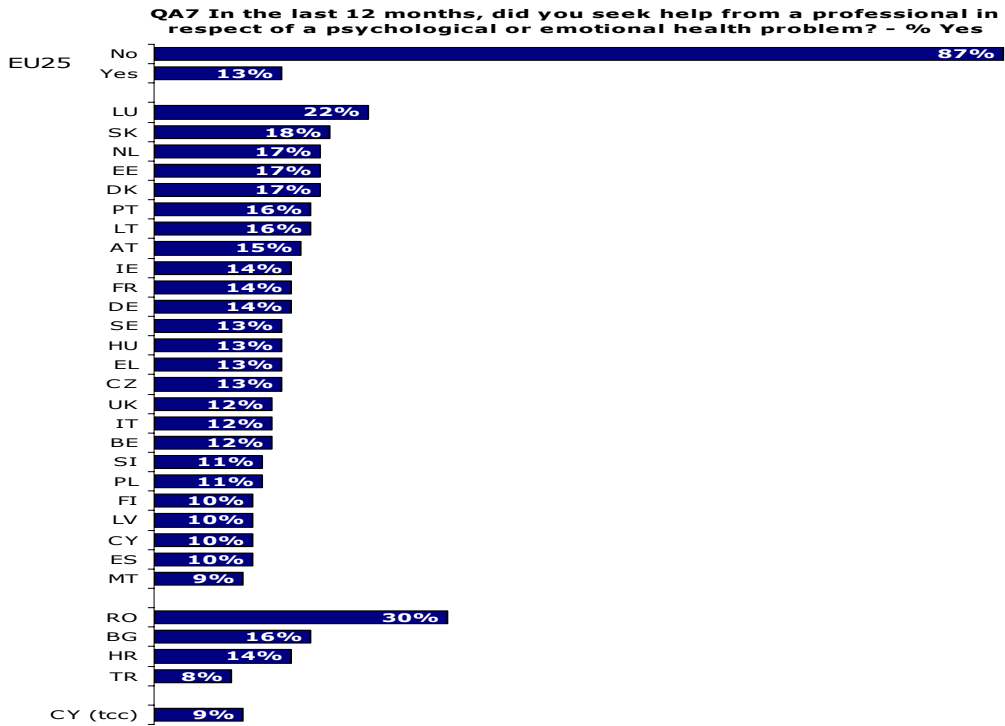
At the country level, residents of Luxembourg (72%), Spain (69%) and the United Kingdom (66%) indicate most frequently that their physical or psychological health has had no effect on their social activities during the last month before this survey. In turn, in four countries, the share of those who have at least rarely recognised negative effects on social activities caused by their physical or psychological health outnumbers those who have never experienced these effects. This is the case in Slovakia (56% experienced effects), Italy (52%) and Lithuania (51%).

Once again the familiar socio-demographic conformities become visible. **Women** are more likely than men to experience some negative effects on social activities caused by their health. This is also the case **the older the respondent is, the lower the education** he/she has, for those **living alone** and for **the retired**. **Also, the effects of mental well-being on social activities are visible.** Notably fewer respondents that have sought for psychological help (29%) indicate that their health has had no effect on social activities than those who have not looked for help (65%).

## 2 CARE AND TREATMENT SERVICES

### 2.1 Sources of Professional Help

- **Europeans seek professional help from a general practitioner -**



In the 12 months prior the interview, **13% of EU citizens have sought help from a professional** in respect of a psychological health problem. The vast majority, 87%, indicate that they have not looked for professional help.

30% of respondents in Romania state that they have sought professional help, followed by 22% of citizens of Luxembourg. In turn, 8% of Turks and 9% of the Maltese indicate that they have turned to a professional in respect of a psychological or emotional health problem.



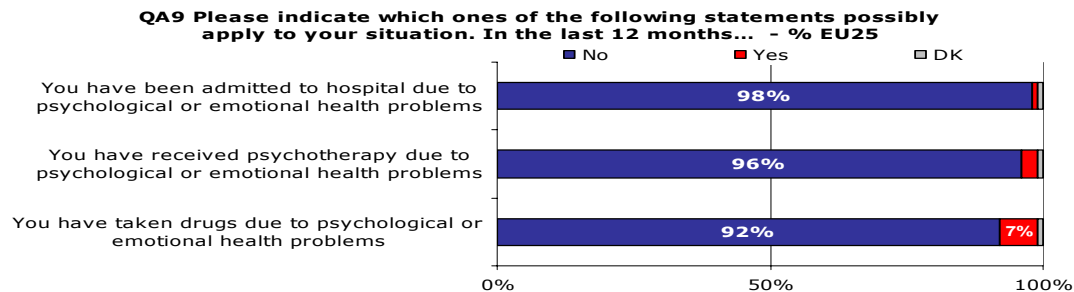
N.B. The figures in this graph are based on 3205 (13% of the total population) respondents that have sought help from a professional in the last 12 months.



Out of the 13% of respondents who have sought professional help, **the vast majority, 70%, has discussed their psychological or emotional health problems with a general practitioner.** At the country level, **a large share of those who have sought psychological help from a professional has turned to a general practitioner.** This is especially the case in Ireland (91%), Slovenia (87%) and the United Kingdom (82%). On the other hand, less than half the citizens of Cyprus (38%), the Netherlands (45%), Finland (48%) and Turkey (48%) have sought help from this source.

## 2.2 Recipients of Treatment

**- Only a minority of Europeans have been treated for psychological or emotional health problems -**



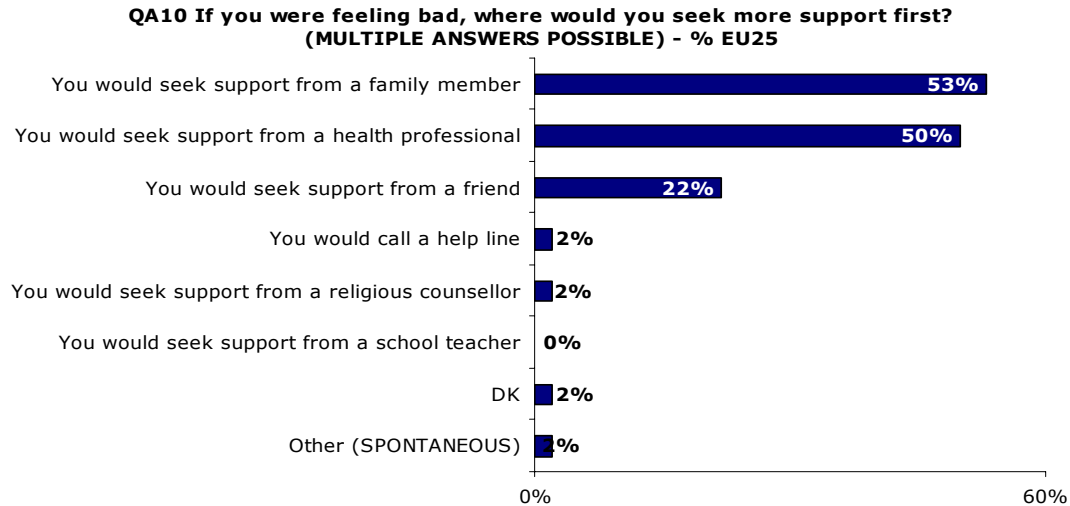
When three different forms of psychological treatment are considered, 7% of the EU citizens state that they have taken drugs due to mental health problems, 3% has received psychotherapy and only 1% has been treated in a hospital in the past 12 months before the interview. In other words, **only a small minority has received any kind of treatment.**

The supplementary breakdowns on whether a respondent has sought psychological help and whether he/she has received treatment in the past 12 months offer interesting additional information to the analysis. First, **out of those who have been treated for psychological problems during the past year, 84% have taken medication, 40% have been seeing a psychotherapist and 17% have been treated in hospital.** Obviously, a number of respondents have received more than one kind of treatment. Second, **among respondents who have sought for psychological help, 41% have taken drugs, 23% have received psychotherapy and 9% have been admitted to hospital.**

It should be noted here, that out of those who indicate that they have sought help, only a minority has also received psychological treatment. 76% have not received psychotherapy, 58% have not taken drugs and 82% have not been treated in hospital. This presumably indicates, at least to a certain extent, that **demand for psychological help and supply of treatment are not always met.**

## 2.3 Sources of Support

**- When in need of support, Europeans turn first to a family member and then to a health care professional -**



When respondents are asked where they would seek more support if they were feeling bad, three sources of help rank above others: **a family member (53%)**, **a health professional (50%)** and **a friend (22%)**.

In general, it can be concluded that **most Europeans would first seek help from a family member or from a health care professional if they were feeling bad.**

When it comes to socio-demographic categories, some variation can be portrayed. **Women (24%)** state slightly more often than men (20%) that they would seek help from a friend if they were feeling bad. **The older the respondent is**, the more likely he/she is to turn to a health professional (59% in the age group 55+). In turn, **the younger the respondent is**, the more often he/she indicates that a family member (61% in the youngest age group) or a friend (37%) would be the first source of support.

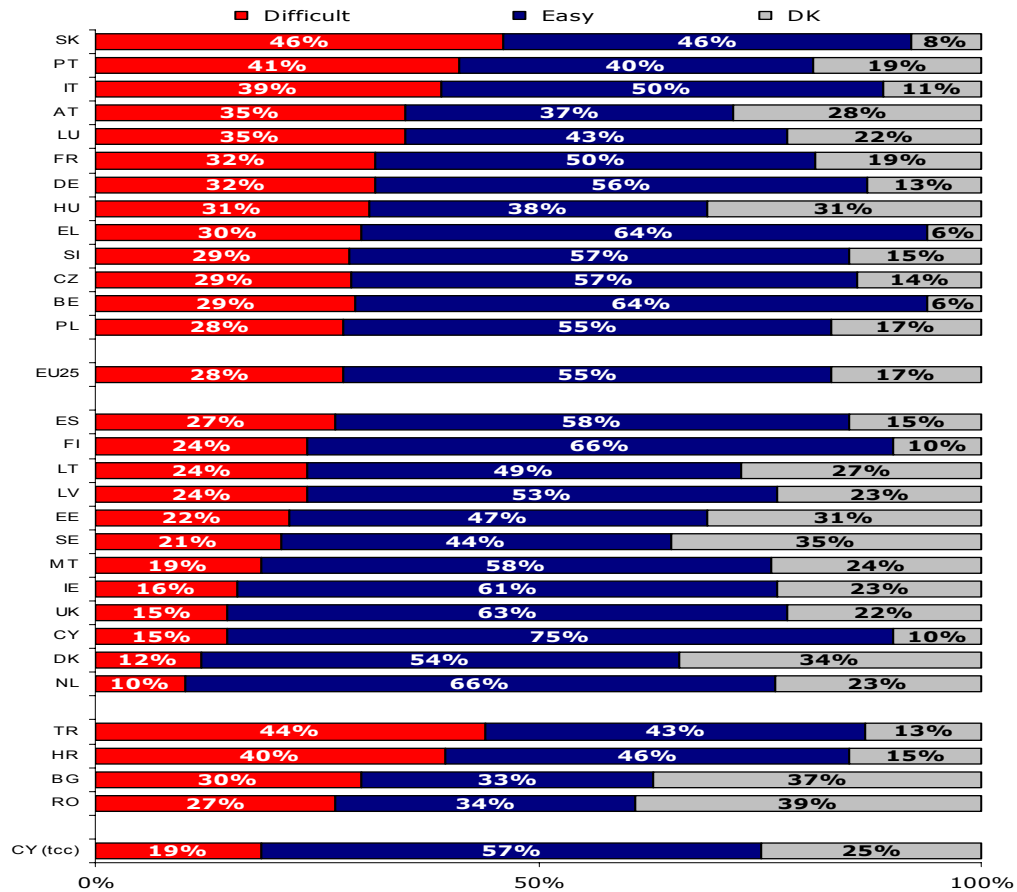
Not surprisingly, those who live in **a household of several members** are more inclined than their counterparts to seek help from a family member (58% of those in 4+ household). Out of professional categories, **students (63%)** indicate most often that they would turn to a family member if they needed support whereas 40% of them would seek help from a friend. In the end, it is interesting to see **to whom those who have actually sought for psychological help would turn first if they needed more support.** The majority states that they would seek help from a health care professional (59%) which is 10 points above the share of those who have not sought psychological help during the last 12 months (49%). Out of **those who received psychological treatment during the previous year**, 66% indicate that they would first seek help from a health professional. This share is 17 points more than the score in the group of those who have not been treated.

Thus, it can be concluded that **Europeans that have either sought psychological help or received treatment for psychological or emotional problems are more willing to seek help from a health professional than those who have not.**

### 3 AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION

- **Just about half of Europeans think it is easy to find information about psychological or emotional health problems** -

**QA11 How easy or difficult do you find it is to find information on psychological or emotional health problems and how to deal with them?**



**55% of EU citizens maintain that finding information on psychological or emotional health problems and how to deal with them is easy.** 14% evaluate that finding information is very easy whereas 41% think it is fairly easy.

**Slovakians (46%), Turks (44%) and the Portuguese (41%) indicate most often that finding information about mental problems is difficult.** In addition, in these countries the group of respondents who consider finding information to be difficult outnumbers those who find acquiring information to be easy. **Citizens of Cyprus (75%), Finland (66%), the Netherlands (66%) and Greece (64%) are most confident in finding information** about psychological or emotional problems and how to deal with them.

As was already observed at the EU level, **high shares of non-responses are perceived in several countries, this being especially the case in Romania (39%), Bulgaria (37%), Sweden (35%) and Denmark (34%).**

When comparing the socio-demographic categories, some patterns emerge. **The older the respondent** is (31% in 55+), the harder he/she finds discovering information on mental health problems and how to deal with them. Also, **the retired (32%), the unemployed (31%) and house persons (31%)** more frequently than their counterparts assess that finding information about mental problems is difficult.

**A prominent result emerges when responses of those who have sought help or who have received treatment are compared with responses of those who have not.** Out of those who have looked for help, 37% indicate that finding information about psychological problems and how to cope with them is difficult whereas for those who have not looked for help, the score is 10 points less (27%).

When breaking this result country-by-country, it can be seen that this is especially the case in Slovakia, Hungary and Luxembourg. Furthermore, the gap between those who have sought psychological help and who have not is the widest in, again, Hungary and Luxembourg but also in Ireland.

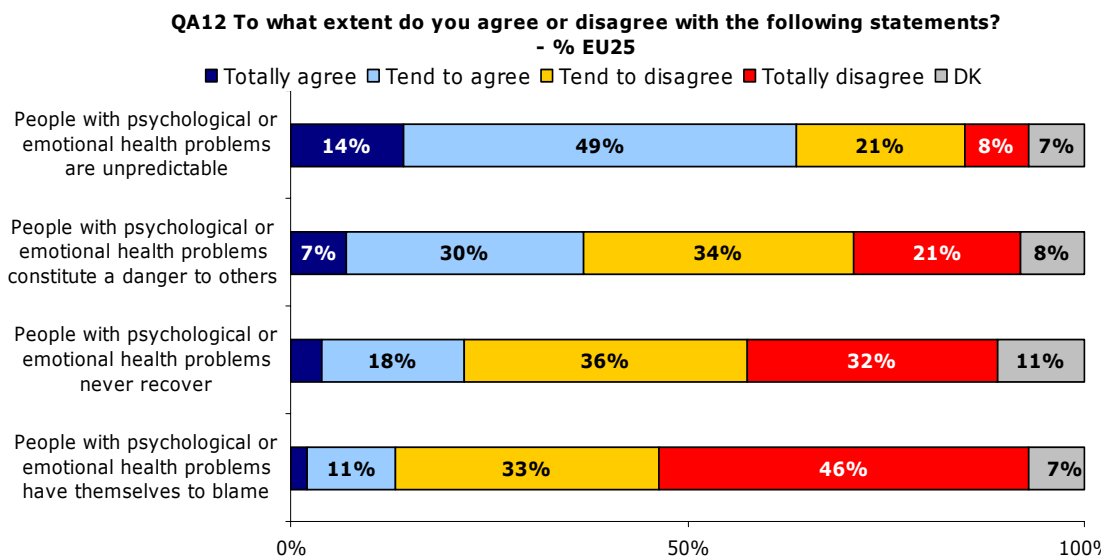
In the end, it can be concluded **that those respondents who presumably need the most information**, i.e. those who have sought help, **appear to find it more difficult** to acquire it than those who at present are not in need of immediate help.

Notwithstanding, in all groups, the majority considers finding information to be easy.

#### 4 PERCEPTIONS ABOUT PEOPLE WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

The last chapter deals with respondents' perceptions of people who have psychological or emotional problems. It describes what kind of impression Europeans appear to have about the behaviour of mentally ill persons and to what extent they believe that a full recovery from a mental illness is possible.

##### ***-Most Europeans think that people with psychological problems are unpredictable-***



**63% of Europeans agree with the statement that people with psychological health problems are unpredictable.** 29% of respondents do not find people with mental problems unpredictable.

**Over a third of respondents (37%) think that people with psychological problems constitute a danger to others.** The majority (55%) maintains the opposite view-point. **A minority, 21%, believes that people with psychological or emotional health problems will never recover.** About a third (32%) totally disagrees with this statement whereas 36% somewhat disagree with it. **Only 14% of respondents maintain that those who have psychological problems should blame themselves for their condition.** A majority, 46%, entirely disagrees with this opinion while a third is somewhat in disagreement with it (33%).

**These results can be seen to portray that most Europeans have a reasonably tolerant way of perceiving their fellow citizens who have psychological or emotional health problems.**

**Out of the 29 countries polled, in 27 those who believe that people with psychological problems are unpredictable outnumber those who think the opposite.** This is especially the case in Greece (77%). The two exceptions where the majority disagrees with this view are Austria and Germany (51% disagreeing in each). **When it comes to whether people with mental difficulties constitute a danger to others, the majority of respondents in 7 countries believe this is the case.** Lithuanians (68%), Latvians (68%) and Estonians (60%) indicate most frequently that in their opinion people with psychological problems pose a threat to others. **In every country polled, a vast majority disagrees with the view that people with psychological or emotional health problems never recover.** The highest share of citizens opposing this view is found in Finland (88% disagreeing), followed by the Turks (82%).

**Finally, only a slight minority in each country believes that people with psychological problems have only themselves to blame.**

**Those who have sought for psychological help or received treatment in the last 12 months agree to a lesser extent than those who have not with the notion that people with psychological problems constitute a danger to others.** This is also the case when it comes to the idea that people with mental problems are unpredictable.

In other words, **those who have personal experiences of mental health problems tend to perceive people with psychological difficulties in a "softer" manner.**

An interesting result is obtained when the statement of people with psychological or emotional health problems never recover is examined. **Those who have personal experiences appear to be slightly more pessimistic about full recovery** than those who have not sought for help or have not been treated over the last year.

**In all these categories, the vast majority agrees that people with psychological difficulties should not only blame themselves for their situation.**

## CONCLUSION

### THE PRESENT SITUATION

Generally speaking, the state of health of Europeans appears to be good. **Most Europeans (over 70%) indicate that their health does not limit them from doing moderate physical activities** such as carrying shopping bags or climbing several flights of stairs.

When it comes to mental well-being, **a significant majority of Europeans have experienced positive and balanced feelings rather than negative feelings in the 4 weeks prior to the survey.** 64% have felt full of life all the time or most of the time and 55% have had a lot of energy, the feelings related to the energy/vitality dimension. Regarding the mental health dimension, 65% have been happy and 63% have felt calm and peaceful.

However, **a substantial share indicates that they do not have lots of energy and they feel tired, the feelings related to energy/vitality dimension, at least sometimes.**

**A link between experienced physical and psychological health is observed here.** Those who have not sought psychological help or received treatment for psychological problems state notably more often that their physical health does not limit them from doing moderate activities and they more frequently express positive feelings in the month prior to the interview.

**The socio-demographic characteristics appear to be in parallel when it comes to both the limits of physical health and mental well-being.** Women, the elderly, the retired and house persons (the categories that are also likely to overlap) more often evaluate the limitations of physical health to be considerable as well as express negative sentiments about their mental well-being. This socio-demographic pattern seems to apply throughout the results of this survey.

### PROBLEMS WITH WORK AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

**A strong connection appears between the state of mental health and the extent to which physical and psychological difficulties cause problems with working life or social activities** even if respondents appear to evaluate that physical health problems are more often than emotional problems a cause of accomplishing less or problems with work.

Over one in two of Europeans declares that their physical health has never led them to accomplish less (54%) or to do their usual activities less carefully (58%). 57% indicate that pain never interferes with their life.

A higher number of respondents consider compared to physical health that emotional problems are never a cause of not completing as many things as they would like (61%) or achieving them with less care (64%).

**3 in 5 Europeans (60%) have never had problems with social activities** such as visiting friends or relatives due to emotional problems.

Nevertheless, **those respondents who have either looked for psychological help or received psychological treatment significantly more often declare**

**that they have difficulties with work and social activities** as a result of either physical or psychological health problems.

In conclusion, **mental ill health, when present, appears to have enormous negative effects on working life and social relations.**

### CARE AND TREATMENT SERVICES

**13% of respondents have sought psychological help over the last 12 months.** This is especially the case in Romania (30%) and Luxembourg (22%). Out of those who have turned to a professional in need of psychological help, 70% have discussed their problems with a general practitioner.

**Only a minority of EU citizens has been treated for psychological or emotional problems** by medication (7%), in psychotherapy (3%) or in hospital (1%) in the year before this survey.

**Out of those who have been treated for psychological problems,** 84% have taken medication, 40% have been seeing a psychotherapist and 17% have been treated in hospital. **Among respondents who have sought psychological help,** 41% have taken drugs, 23% have received psychotherapy and 9% have been admitted to hospital.

It should be noted here, that out of those who indicate that they have sought help, only a minority has also received psychological treatment. This presumably indicates, at least to a certain extent, that **demand for psychological help and supply of treatment do not always go together.**

**When Europeans are feeling bad they would turn to a family member (53%) or a health professional (50%).** About a quarter seek more support from a friend (22%).

### AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION

**55% of EU citizens maintain that acquiring information on psychological or emotional health problems is easy.** Nevertheless, a substantial share of Europeans, 29%, considers that finding information is difficult. 17% of respondents do not give an answer to this question which may indicate that about 1 in 5 Europeans has never considered finding information on mental health issues.

It can be noted **that those respondents who presumably need the most information,** i.e. those who have sought help, **appear to find it more difficult** to acquire it than those who at present are not in need of immediate help. This is especially the case in Slovakia, Hungary and Luxembourg. Notwithstanding, in every country and all socio-demographic groups, the majority considers finding information to be easy.

### PERCEPTIONS ABOUT PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

In general, **Europeans appear to have a reasonably tolerant way of perceiving their fellow citizens who have psychological or emotional health problems.**

37% of respondents think that people with psychological problems constitute a danger to others. A minority, 21%, believes that people with psychological or emotional health problems will never recover and only 14% of respondents maintain that those who have psychological problems should blame themselves for their condition. However, the majority (63%) believes that people with mental health problems are unpredictable.

**Those who have personal experiences of mental health problems tend to perceive people with psychological difficulties in a more empathetic way.**