

PRESS RELEASE

New consumer survey shows Netherlands lags behind many other EU countries in using self care. Consumers lack knowledge, skills and income

Bad Hofgastein, 3 October 2103: Dutch consumers wish to take greater control of their health through self care. However, they face barriers and are missing out on many of the personal, social and economic benefits available. This was revealed in a survey (<http://selfcare.epposi.org>) examining detailed attitudes of European citizens to self care for the first time. The Self Care Perception Barometer was commissioned by Epposi, a Brussels-based independent, multi-stakeholder health think-tank. It surveyed almost 2,000 citizens in 10 European countries, including the Netherlands, looking at perceptions of self-medication, personal health maintenance and accessing the knowledge and skills required for self-care.

Launching the survey at the European Health Forum Gastein, Austria, Jacqueline Bowman-Busato, Executive Director of Epposi, said; "Our survey shows that consumers want to use self care to take greater control of their own health and well-being. Almost 90% of people spoken to for the survey believe that self care is crucial to staying healthy and to managing their illnesses such as diabetes, incontinence or their minor ailments." However, many people feel they are prevented from managing their own health by cost, health literacy and even communications skills of medical professionals." She continued; "These barriers can and should be overcome because the individual, social and economic benefits of self care are really significant. Even replacing a tiny percentage of hospital visits by self care, for example, would lessen financial and human resource pressure of health care systems, and empower patients and their families".

Ms Bowman-Busato pointed out that many barriers were relatively easy to address. "Improving basic health literacy and providing quality information would be an excellent start." In the Netherlands, only one in eight respondents felt very confident to take care of their own health, less than half the number in Scotland. Ms. Bowman-Busato also cited financial barriers; "Self care products and services need to be easily accessible and affordable; 20% of those surveyed said they found the cost prohibitive. Governments should identify policies that encourage self care, especially in low income groups." This is particularly relevant in Denmark, where the number of respondents identifying income as a barrier to self care was around six times higher than in Scotland.

The main reasons for the gap between desire to self care and practice are a lack of confidence and a lack of information. Less than 20% make lifestyle changes, with fewer still choosing to self-medicate. Only one in seven people reported that they felt very confident to practice self care. In addition, a lack of easily accessible, reliable information leaves individuals dependent on other sources. The majority of people still choose to visit their family doctor as their first step in dealing with health problems, despite 75% saying healthcare professionals lack the communication skills to help. Around 20% use the internet as an initial source of information, with 10% asking their pharmacist.

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<http://selfcare.epposi.org>

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About self care:

Self care is generally understood as meaning personal health maintenance. It is an activity by an individual, family or community, with the intention of improving or restoring health, or treating or preventing diseases. In practice, this can mean exercising to maintain physical fitness and good mental health, good diet, self-medicating, practising good hygiene and avoiding health hazards. Self care also means taking care of minor ailments, long-term conditions, or one's own health after discharge from secondary and tertiary health care.

About the Epposi Self Care Perception Barometer:

The notion of self care is gaining growing acceptance in health systems across Europe. Yet little is known about how the public views self care. The Self Care Barometer, the first of its kind, will provide benchmark for future surveys, allowing us to track trends citizens' attitudes and appetite for self care. The research will be conducted every two years.

TNS Global carried out the fieldwork on behalf of EPPOSI, with ten countries participating: Denmark, Spain, Italy, Scotland, Finland, France, Netherlands, Germany, Slovakia & Poland.

The Self Care Barometer shows that there is an appetite for self care. However, new policies are needed to support citizens' use of self care, including increasing health literacy and improving access to information and expertise. Future editions of the EPPOSI Self Care Barometer will track the changes in public perceptions of self care.

About Epposi:

Founded in 1994, Epposi is an independent, not-for-profit, partnership-based and multi-stakeholder think tank based in Brussels, Belgium.

Our goal is to work at the "cutting edge" of European health policy-making, providing members and the wider public with high quality independent research, capacity building, knowledge exchange and dissemination with the aim of bridging the gap between innovation and improved public health outcomes. In order to fulfil our mission and build on our established, unique, citizen-centric and multi-constituency approach, Epposi enables consensus-driven, equally-weighted outcomes between the different stakeholder groups of its membership: patients' organisations, science and industry.

Epposi is open to members from EU-facing umbrella patients' organisations, commercial enterprises and their related trade bodies, research institutes, professional and business federations. Associate membership is open on nomination to NGOs representing a broad range of civil society interests, foundations and international organisations that support the Epposi ethos and are active in human healthcare.

For more information about Epposi please visit www.epposi.org.