

Editorials

# Protecting health in hard times

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**Martin McKee, professor of European public health<sup>1</sup>, David Stuckler, research fellow<sup>2</sup>, Jose M Martin-Moreno, director of programme management<sup>3</sup>**

[Author affiliations](#)

[martin.mckee@lshtm.ac.uk](mailto:martin.mckee@lshtm.ac.uk)

Europe’s health ministers exchange experiences on the impact of the economic crisis

“ALEXEY NIKOLSKY/AFP”

Health ministers from across Europe came together in Moscow in September at the 60th meeting of the European regional committee of the World Health Organization. High on their agenda was the ongoing economic difficulty facing many of their countries. Their experiences varied. Some had seen their budgets frozen whereas others had experienced real cuts. A fortunate few, however, had seen budget increases, as a result of recognition by their cabinet colleagues of the necessity of protecting the most vulnerable at times of crisis. As ministers and institutional partners shared experiences and challenges, they endorsed WHO Europe’s call to move forward as a region under a consolidated European Health Policy, which will foster effective and coordinated action to bolster health systems in the face of evolving challenges.

Three main messages on the financial crisis emerged from member states during a technical briefing devoted to this topic. The first was the need for health ministers and their advisers to engage actively in discussions about the economy. There was confusion among politicians, media commentators, and the public about the differences between deficit and debt (for example, the United Kingdom has a high deficit but relatively low government debt) and between debt held by government, banks, the non-financial corporate ...

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- ☐ The specific phase/year F1, CT1, ST3...
- ☐ Non-consultant doctor
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- ☐ None -- junior doctors is the correct term
- ☐ Other:

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