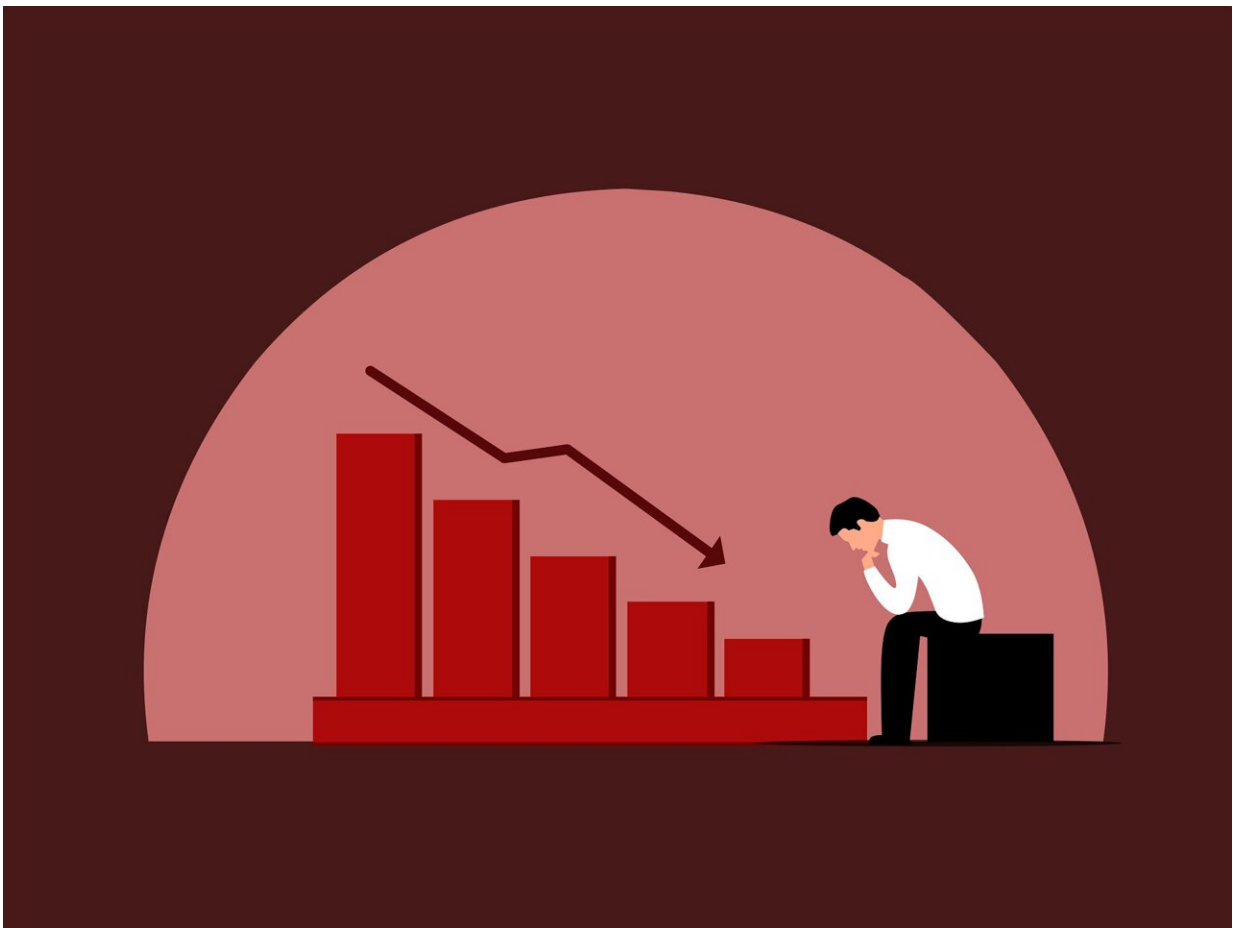


European study finds drop in suicides in last decade may be linked to active prevention measures

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A major new study confirms the trend toward fewer suicides in Europe. The findings show that suicide rates are down in 15 countries (including Germany and Italy), and stable elsewhere (including France, Spain and U.K.). Only Turkey shows a significant increase. This work is presented for the first time at the [European Congress of Psychiatry](#) in Paris, taking place March 25–28.

Suicide is one of the major causes of premature death, globally around 700,000 suicides are reported each year. European suicide rates have been generally dropping since the beginning of the century. Each suicide indicates a decision to end one's life, and so in principle may be preventable.

EU statistics show that around 1.1% of all deaths are due to suicide, meaning that in the EU an average year around 56,000 deaths as the result of suicide—more if the whole of Europe is considered.

The new study considered suicide rates, as listed in European public databases, in 38 European [countries](#) between 2011 and 2019. 15 of these countries showed a significant drop in suicides (adjusted for population), with no significant change in the other 22 countries. Turkey was the only country to report a significant increase, although the reasons for this are unclear.

Researcher Dr. Anna Gimenez (University of Barcelona) said, "This work confirms that suicide rates continued to drop—or at worse held stable- across Europe in the 2011 to 2019 period. Psychiatric disorders are related to an overwhelming proportion of these cases. In the last years, several [specific interventions](#) and action plans for [suicide prevention](#) have been implemented in a number of European countries, and we believe that these might have had an impact on suicide trends.

"This contrasts with, for example, the United States, where suicide rates

increased by 36% in the 2000–2018 period, before beginning to drop. The differences in trends from country to country of course reflect local society, but may also reflect the adoption of measures to prevent suicide in each country. We're not yet sure about this, but it seems the most likely cause. Previous research has shown that introducing these measures can be effective, so our next step is to confirm that the improvement is linked to this direct action."

The total suicides rate in Europe (38 countries) went down from 20 deaths for every 100,000 people in 2011 to 16 per 100,000 in 2019, a drop in suicide deaths of almost 20% in this period.

Lithuania, which previously had by far the highest suicide rate in Europe, showed the greatest drop in suicides.

All European countries have agreed to work with the World Health Organization to implement suicide reduction measures, including:

- limiting access to the means of suicide (e.g., pesticides, firearms, certain medications);
- interacting with the media for responsible reporting of suicide;
- fostering socio-emotional life skills in adolescents;
- early identification, assessment, and ongoing management of anyone who is affected by suicidal behaviors.

Dr. Giovanna Fico (University of Barcelona) said, "Of course, our study took us to 2019; COVID, and the ongoing war in Ukraine may affect suicide trends, but overall the trend in Europe is towards fewer successful suicides."

Professor Philip Gorwood, ex-president of the European Psychiatric Association, University of Paris), said, "As countries cope differently to reduce the burden of mental disorders, it is interesting to know which

measures are efficient, and actually translate into something as crucial as a decrease of the suicidal mortality rate. Therefore this European study is very interesting, showing that there are large heterogeneities between countries, and that for a relatively important number of countries, it is indeed possible to reduce the number of deaths by suicide per year,"

The following 22 countries have shown no significant change in [suicide rates](#) from 2011 to 2019:

Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden, Iceland, Norway, United Kingdom, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania, Ukraine.

Provided by European Psychiatric Association

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