



## PRESS RELEASE

**Embargo: Monday 27 May 2013 at 00:01**

### **The Health and Care of Pregnant Women and Babies in Europe**

Second European Perinatal Health Report released by the EURO-PERISTAT project

Death rates in childbirth and in the first year of childbirth have decreased throughout Europe over the 6 years 2004 to 2010 but still vary widely, along with differences in the populations and the maternity care provided, according to a new study, co-authored by Professor Alison Macfarlane and Nirupa Dattani from City University London.

The Second European Perinatal Health Report is the most comprehensive study on the health and care of pregnant women and babies in Europe and examined births and their context in 29 European countries in 2010 and changes between 2004 and 2010. The report raises concerns over the burden of mortality and morbidity.

It also identifies important gaps in data about important subject such as smoking and obesity. In countries with data, 1 woman in 10 smoked during pregnancy and the same proportion was clinically obese. Nearly 21% of all women in Scotland, who gave birth in 2010 were obese.

- **Stillbirth rates** at or after 28 weeks of gestation ranged from under 2.0 per 1000 live births and stillbirths in the Czech Republic and Iceland to 4.0 or more per 1000 in France, Latvia, the region of Brussels in Belgium, and Romania. The countries of the United Kingdom also had relatively high stillbirth rates at 3.8 per 1,000 in England and Wales, 3.6 in Scotland and 3.4 in Northern Ireland.
- **Neonatal mortality rates**, deaths in the first month of life. When babies born before 24 weeks of pregnancy were excluded to improve consistency, rates ranged from 0.8 per 1,000 live births in Iceland to 4.0 in Malta and 4.3 in Romania. Rates for the UK fell in between, being 2.0 per 1,000 in England and Wales, 2.1 in Scotland and 3.0 in Northern Ireland.
- **Multiple pregnancies:** Babies from multiple births are 10 times more likely than singletons to be delivered preterm and as a result have higher risks of neonatal and infant death. **Rates of multiple birth** rose in 20 of the 23 countries that provided data on this indicator in both years. In 2010, rates ranged from 9 per 1,000 pregnant women in Romania to 27 in Cyprus, compared with 16 per 1,000 in the UK
- **Maternal age:** Since 2004, the average ages of women giving birth in Europe have risen. The UK is unusual in having relatively high proportions of both older and younger mothers, with 19.7 per cent of mothers aged 35 or older and 5.7 per cent under the age of 20, compared with two per cent or less in most countries.
- **Smoking during pregnancy:** Our data show a decline over time in the 18 countries where these data were available; in many of these countries, more than 1 in 10 women continued to smoke during pregnancy. Countries with highest proportions of smokers were: Spain (data from Catalonia – 14.4%), France (17.7%), and some countries of the UK (Scotland (19%), Wales (16%), Northern Ireland (15%).



- **Underweight and obesity:** Data on maternal body mass index were collected for the first time in this report and 18 countries did not have these data. In many countries who did, more than 10% of pregnant women were obese, with highs in Wallonia in Belgium (13.6%), Germany (13.7%), and Scotland (20.7%)

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#### NOTES TO EDITORS:

- The Second European Perinatal Health Report is the most comprehensive study on the health and care of pregnant women and babies in Europe and examined births and their context in 29 European countries in 2010 and changes between 2004 and 2010.
- On May 27th, the EURO-PERISTAT project released the European Perinatal Health Report "The health and care of pregnant women and their babies in 2010". It can be downloaded free of charge as a PDF from <http://www.europeristat.com>.
- Funding: Support comes from the European Union's Health Programme
- The EURO-PERISTAT project is coordinated by the Institut de la santé et de la recherche médicale (INSERM) in Paris. Data collection is coordinated by TNO, the Netherlands.
- The names of the EURO-PERISTAT collaborators from each participating country and their contact details can be found at <http://www.europeristat.com>.

**The European Perinatal Health Report** released by the Euro-Peristat project is the most comprehensive report on the health and care of pregnant women and babies in Europe and brings together data from 29 countries, including all European Union member states except Bulgaria, plus Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. Euro-Peristat takes a new approach to health reporting. Instead of comparing countries on single indicators like infant mortality (the 'report card', 'dashboard' or 'league table' approach), our report paints a fuller picture by presenting data about mortality, low birthweight and preterm birth alongside data about health care and maternal characteristics that can affect the outcome of pregnancy. It also illustrates differences in the ways that data are collected, and explains how these can affect comparisons between countries.

The first Euro-Peristat report, with data for 2004, was published in 2008. It found wide differences between the countries of Europe in indicators of perinatal health and care. Documenting these differences is important because it shows that gains are possible in most countries, provides information about alternative ways of providing care and raises important questions about the effectiveness of national healthcare policies and the role of evidence in maternity care. This second report provides the opportunity to see whether these gains have been achieved and whether inequalities between the countries of Europe have narrowed.

**City University London** is a global University committed to academic excellence, with a focus on business and the professions and an enviable central London location. It is in the top five per cent of universities in the world according to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2012/13 and in the top thirty universities in the UK according to the Times Higher Education Table of Tables 2012. It is ranked in the top 10 in the UK for both graduate-level jobs (The Sunday Times University Guide 2013) and starting salaries (Which University?).

The University attracts over 17,000 students (35% at postgraduate level) from more than 150 countries and academic staff from over 50 countries. Its academic range is broadly-based with world leading strengths in business; law; health sciences; engineering; mathematical sciences; informatics; social sciences; and the arts including journalism and music. The University's history dates back to 1894, with the foundation of the Northampton Institute on what is now the main part of City's campus. In 1966, City was granted University status by Royal Charter and the Lord Mayor of London was



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invited to be Chancellor, a unique arrangement that continues today. Professor Paul Curran has been Vice-Chancellor of City University London since 2010.