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ROLE OF SOCIAL WELFARE IN SUICIDE PREVENTION IN EUROPE

Objectives: the aims were to assess the relationship between suicide mortality and social expenditure in 26 European countries; explore attitudes towards social welfare and their relationship with suicide mortality; and compare attitudes towards social welfare in Eastern and Western Europe.

Methods: age-adjusted, gender-specific suicide trends for 1980–2005 were obtained from the WHO Mortality Database. Data about social expenditures per capita were obtained from the OECD Database. Three questions about citizens' attitudes towards social welfare were taken from the European Social Survey. Correlations were analysed using Pearson's test. Differences between mean scores for attitudes in the Western and Eastern European countries were then calculated.

Results: correlations between social expenditure and suicide trends are negative in most countries among both males and females. Correlations between attitudes towards social welfare and suicide mortality rates were revealed among male population only and are negative. Differences in attitudes towards social welfare were revealed between Eastern and Western European countries.

Conclusions: Higher social expenditures are inversely associated with suicide mortality in majority of studied European countries. Stronger confidence in social welfare is considered as having suicide-preventive effect. Confidence in social welfare is stronger in the countries of Western Europe.