

The European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety avoids explaining why the use of psychoactive drugs has increased in Spain by 57%

On April 27th, the *Fórum Europa Informative Breakfast* (Desayuno Informativo Fórum Europa) was held in Madrid. The main speaker was the European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, **Mr Vytenis Andriukaitis**.

The event was hosted by **Ms Dolors Montserrat**, Minister of Health, Social Services and Equality, and attended by many politicians and personalities. It was organized by Nueva Economía Fórum, a private and independent debating institution whose objective is the promotion of debate and dialogue through open forums, and it was sponsored by Asisa, BT and Red Eléctrica de España.

During the event, topics of great relevance to the field of national and European health were addressed, such as the use and control of medicines, the importance of coordination among the countries of the European Union (EU) in the field of health and the possibility that the European Medicines Agency (EMA) will disembark in Barcelona, once it leaves London after Brexit.

However, when specifically asked both about aspects related to mental health care in Europe and the reasons that, according to the European Commission, might explain the increase of up to 57% in the consumption of psychotropic/psychiatric medications –such as anxiolytics and/or antidepressants– in our country in the last twelve years, the European representative, who at an earlier point in his speech, speaking about the need to guarantee vaccination in Europe, had mentioned the need to "support the companies" that generate the drugs, avoided answering the question formulated by the Spanish Psychological Association (Consejo General de la Psicología de España) on the generalized increase in the consumption of psychoactive drugs in Spain and in Europe.

Mr Andriukaitis referred only to the importance of promoting the prophylactic aspects of health and mental health interventions, and he spoke of the need to introduce and contemplate psychological, educational and anthropological measures from the earliest stages of childhood, and of investing in prevention and early care, with the idea of focusing and creating a perspective focused on "health rather than healing or disease".

The evasiveness of the European Commissioner in responding to the reasons for this increase astonishes this collegial organization, given the exponential increase in the incidence of emotional and mental health problems in recent years and the evidence provided by the main mental health organizations, such as the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), which recommend non-pharmacological treatments as the treatment of choice for a great many of these disorders.