

## THE DEMOGRAPHY OF DOWN SYNDROME IN 39 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Trisomy-21/Down syndrome is a major cause of mental retardation. For the first time, a systematic survey has been made of the demography of Down syndrome (DS) in Europe. The authors Gert de Graaf, Frank Buckley and Brian Skotko are involved in Down syndrome education programs in the Netherlands, UK and USA, respectively. In the March 2021 issue of the European Journal of Human Genetics they present estimates of the nonselective and actual live birth prevalence of DS for the years 2011-2015 in 39 European countries. An estimated number of 417,000 people with DS were living in Europe in 2015, which would have been about 572,000 without selective pregnancy termination. The average reduction of the 2011-2015 live birth prevalence was 54% among these countries, varying from 0% in Malta and 8% in Ireland (countries with restrictive termination regulations) to an average of 38% in Eastern Europe and 62% for the rest of Europe (with the highest in Spain, 83%). There was a significant correlation between this percentage and the Gross Domestic Product per capita ( $r = 0.73$ ;  $p < 0.000$ ). Such differences may reflect the wealth of a country and participation in prenatal screening/testing programs. These numbers provide insights into the effects of prenatal screening and testing and may serve to improve education and health policies for people with DS.