



Social determinants and health inequalities

Policy needs for health information

Unit C4, Health determinants, DG Health and Food Safety

Meeting of the Expert Group on Health Information

28 January 2015

Action on health inequalities

- **2009 Commission Communication “Solidarity in health: reducing health inequalities in the EU”**
 - Support policies and action with Member States, Regions and other stakeholders
 - Health as part of overall social and economic development (e.g., public health, employment, social, research and regional policy)
 - Vulnerable groups – Roma, migrants
 - Research, measurement and knowledge, audit
- **Council Conclusions**
 - 'Equity and health in all policies: Solidarity in health' (2010)
 - 'Closing health gaps within the EU through concerted action to promote healthy lifestyle behaviours' (2011)
- **Joint Action on Health Inequalities 2011-2014**



Current situation

- Narrowing health gap gap **between Member States** (life expectancy; infant mortality)
 - Still 8 ys difference in life expectancy at birth
 - 19 ys difference in healthy life years
 - Inequalities in health and in health behaviours exist between socioeconomic groups in all Members States
- **2013 Commission progress report; Marmot report Health inequalities in the EU:**
 - Calls for more concerted action at all levels of government
 - *"Ensure progressive improvement in the availability and use of data needed to identify priorities, plan action, monitor trends and evaluate what actions are most effective"*



Reducing Health inequalities through inclusive growth and poverty reduction

- **Europe 2020** strategy to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth
- Social Investment Package and Commission staff working document '**Investing in Health**'
- **European Structural and Investment Funds** for 2014-2020 to promote social inclusion through enhanced **access to healthcare**, to **reduce inequalities in health status**
- **2011 EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies**, 2014 Commission Report on implementation
- **2014 Roma Health Report**
 - lack of ethnically disaggregated data and the monitoring of a partly mobile Roma population



Addressing inequalities through access to health care

- *Safeguarding equal access to quality services can help reducing poverty and fighting against social inclusion*
- **2014 Commission Communication on effective, accessible and resilient health systems:**
 - comparative assessment of health systems' performance



Brussels, 4.4.2014
COM(2014) 215 final

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION

On effective, accessible and resilient health systems

Information on health inequalities

- Inequality dimensions: *information on health inequalities between Member States, regions, or socio-economic groups (gap or gradient in health)*
 - SES groups: educational level, occupational class and income level, other: ethnicity, immigrant status or place of residence
- Relevant indicator groups (*Joint Action ECHIM*) e.g., *Demography and socio-economic situation, Health status, Health determinants, Health services, Health promotion*
- Key sources of data: *ECHI, Eurostat, OECD, WHO, EU-SILC, ...*

Examples of indicators

ECHI chapter	INDICATOR
<i>Health status</i>	<p><i>Life expectancy (by SES – education)</i> <i>Infant mortality</i> <i>Self-perceived health (by SES – education)</i> <i>Self-reported chronic morbidity (by SES – education)</i></p>
<i>Health determinants</i>	<p><i>Body mass index (by SES - education level)</i> <i>Regular smokers (by SES - education level)</i> <i>Consumption of food/vegetables (by SES - education level)</i> <i>Physical activity (by SES - education level)</i></p>
<i>Health services</i>	<p><i>Practising physicians</i> <i>Practising nurses</i> <i>Hospital beds (NUTS II – Eurostat)</i> <i>Equity of access to health care services (by SES - income/education level)</i></p>

Some limitations/challenges

- Fragmentation of information (*databases - research projects, duplications/synergies*)
- Lacking definition of indicators (*health determinants, health promotion*)
- Lacking data (*regular data collection, comparability*)
- Sustainability and governance of health information systems
- Specific questions
 - **List of inequality indicators for policy monitoring, data availability by SES/vulnerable groups (certain age/marginalized groups), different stratification schemes**

Challenges for policy making

- Addressing health inequalities is a cross-cutting issue for policymaking
- Interventions to improve the health of the population may increase health inequalities: impacts on groups with poorer health should be considered
- Insufficient monitoring and evaluation of strategies and policies hampers the identification/dissemination of good practices, the implementation of effective interventions and making the economic case for action on health inequalities
- Equity dimension of health monitoring needs to be improved by making better use of existing health information systems and monitoring tools

Thank you!

