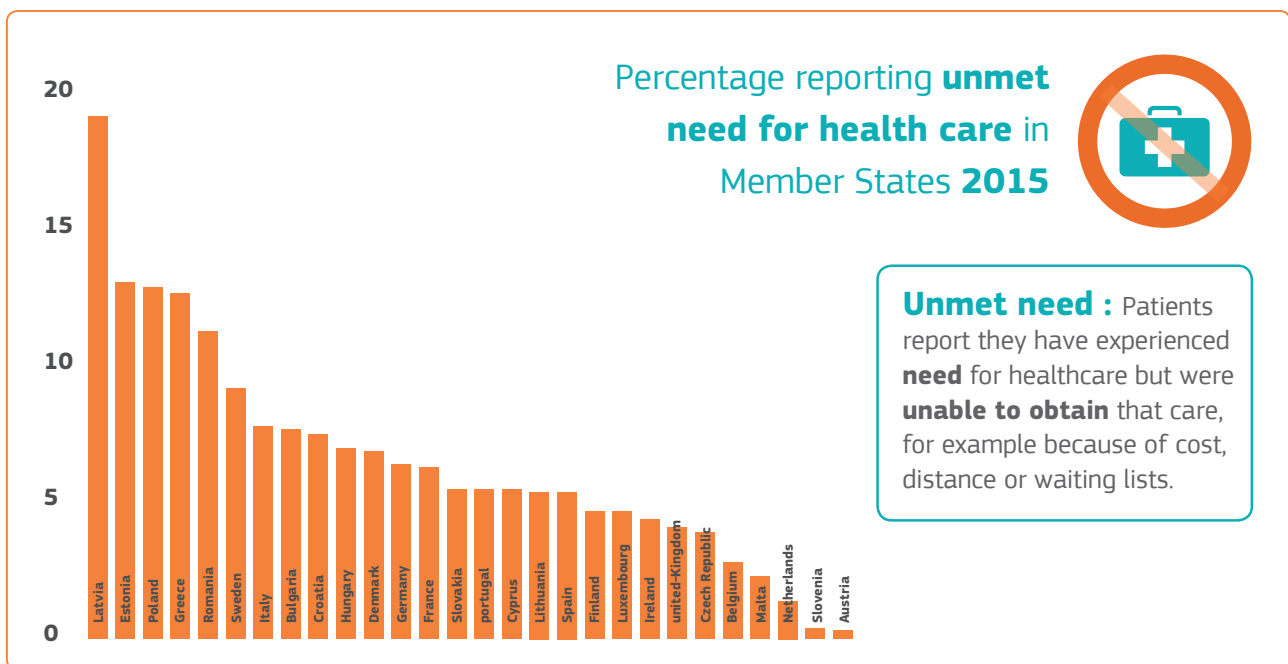# MONITORING ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE TO IMPROVE POLICY MAKING

Opinion by the Expert Panel on Effective Ways of Investing in Health (EXPH)

Why benchmark access to healthcare?

Access to timely, high-quality and affordable healthcare is one of the 'building blocks' of the social model we stand and strive for. It is one of the 20 principles **at the heart of the European Pillar of Social Rights**, proclaimed jointly by EU Institutions and Member States on 17 November 2017 and recognised by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (art.35).

Limited access to healthcare is still a reality for many across the EU and has serious repercussions, **reducing socio-economic growth potential and producing effects going beyond generations**. For various reasons, such as austerity measures, access to healthcare risks to be thrown off track, while **full and effective access to healthcare should come to the forefront of the policy debate.**

Percentage reporting **unmet need for health care** in Member States **2015**

Unmet need : Patients report they have experienced **need** for healthcare but were **unable to obtain** that care, for example because of cost, distance or waiting lists.

System of benchmarking:

- **Quantitative benchmark:** median value achieved by the best performing Member States

- **Second level indicators**: additional sources for a better overview of gaps in access to helathcare across the EU

- **Qualitative benchmark**: identification and analysis of the barriers in access to healthcare, including for groups at particular disadvantage

What needs to be achieved?

1. **Gaps in access to healthcare need to be well diagnosed and acknowledged.**
2. **Policy measures need to be mobilised taking into account the key preconditions for equal access to healthcare:**

- Financial resources must be **linked to health needs**

- Services must be **affordable** for everyone

- Services must be **relevant**, **appropriate** and **cost-effective**

- Facilities must be **within easy reach**

- Enough health workers with the **right skills** need to be in the **right place**

- Quality medicines and devices must be readily **available**

- People must be able to use services **when they need them**

- Services must be **acceptable** to everyone

What are the panel's recommendations to improve access to healthcare?

The opinion puts forward the idea of **benchmarking as a tool to identify the challenges in access to healthcare.** The idea of benchmarking is not to blame and shame, but to help Member States **identify good practices** in the race to the top. Acknowledging the challenges is a precondition to mobilise policy measures.

The opinion is a practical guidance to better **understand and quantify the scale, nature and distribution of unmet need in the EU Member States and help them design appropriate policies** and monitor their impact. Proposing benchmarks based on unmet need data collected through the Survey of Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) and complementary analysis on the basis of other existing data, the Panel encourages Member State to put in place comprehensive policies to **bridge the gaps in access to healthcare**.

What action can be envisaged at EU level?

To make solid progress, the EU needs to act in close cooperation with all relevant stakeholders. The sense of strong ownership of Member States is crucial to the achievement of effective universal access to healthcare. The **EU can support Member States producing momentum** for change through:

- **The mobilisation of existing tools, like the European Semester and available funds.**

- **The exchange of good practice and mutual learning between Member States.**

- **The refinement of the analysis of challenges in access to healthcare.**