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EXpert Panel on effective ways of investing in Health

Hearing on ‘the organisation of resilient health and social care following the Covid-19 pandemic’

Brussels, 20 October 2020 (online meeting)

Aim and objectives

The Expert Panel on effective ways of investing in health (EXPH) is an interdisciplinary and independent group established by the European Commission in 2012 to provide non-binding independent advice on matters related to effective, accessible and resilient health systems in the form of opinions.

The aim of this hearing was to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to share their views on the draft opinion of the Expert Panel on ***‘The Organisation of Resilient Health and Social Care following the Covid-19 Pandemic.’*** The draft opinion was made available on the Expert Panel’s website.

Panel members - speakers

Prof. Jan De Maeseneer (chair of the hearing), Prof. Luigi Siciliani, Dr Dionne Kringos, Prof. Christos Lionis, Dr Heather-Lynn Rogers.

In total 180 participants attended the hearing.

Presentation of the draft Opinion

The Panel members presented the main elements of the opinion (1) the building blocks of resilient health and social care organisation, (2) the elements and conditions for capacity building to strengthen health system resilience, (3) healthcare provision for vulnerable patient groups and how to sustain such provision in a system under stress, and (4) an approach to develop and implement “resilience tests” of Member State health systems. The opinion concludes with the Panel's recommendations, including enhancing local workforce training and resilience, identifying and reducing disinformation, strengthening primary and mental health care, developing and implementing (a) comprehensive resilience testing of health systems that use qualitative and quantitative data collection methodologies and (b) corresponding learning communities within and across Member States to share lessons learned through this process.

Open discussion: participants' views

Participants in the discussion:

- Stressed that an ambitious reform agenda for health systems should be implemented and health systems should be redesigned towards a more value-based approach in order to make them more resilient to all types of challenges;
- Asked how the suggested recommendations would be aligned with the realities of the EU 2020 Strategic Foresight Report and the EU4Health programme;
- Mentioned the role of EU and a need for a body at the highest level that regularly assesses health systems resilience in the EU and preparedness for future pandemics;
- Drew attention to the need to strengthen the partnership/interface between care professionals, patients and their informal care-givers;
- Emphasised the needs of patients with chronic conditions, such as cancer patients, kidney patients, patients with rare diseases, patients affected by neurological disorders;
- Argued that conclusions should be drawn on the similarities between the response to and needs of managing the pandemic, and a number of systemic responses to ongoing 'slow-burning' health challenges, such as chronic conditions or climate emergency;
- Highlighted the role of hospital pharmacists, and community pharmacists;
- Stressed importance to plan for ageing population and make our health systems more resilient to the demographic shift and any future health crisis;
- Asked the Panel to include issues of:
 - self-care
 - medicine shortages
 - data interoperability across sectors

In a live poll conducted during the hearing, 67% of respondents marked the opinion as relevant or very relevant for their work. Conditions for capacity building of resilient health and social care being the most relevant for 47% of respondents. In the poll, respondents were almost equally split in their views on the questions whether EU institutions or bodies (32%), national authorities (31%) or independent experts (32%) should be in charge of conducting resilience tests of health systems.

Next steps

Participants were invited to send any additional comments by 30 October 2020 via email to SANTE-EXPERT-PANEL@ec.europa.eu.

The Panel will finalise its work on this opinion in November 2020.