



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

HEALTH & FOOD SAFETY DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Digital, EU4Health and Health systems modernisation

State of Health, European Semester, Health Technology Assessment

EXPERT GROUP ON HEALTH SYSTEMS PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (HSPA)

32ND MEETING

21 MARCH 2024, 09:30 – 13:00

VIRTUAL PLENARY MEETING

MEETING MINUTES

Participants:

Virtual: 24 EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Slovenia, Slovakia, Sweden), Norway, OECD, WHO Europe, the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, the Technical University of Berlin and European Commission (DG SANTE and DG REFORM).

Co-Chairs: DG SANTE (European Commission) and Malta (Member States).

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1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

The co-Chairs opened the meeting and welcomed participants to the 32nd plenary meeting of the HSPA Expert Group.

After a round of introductions, the co-Chairs informed that there had not been any working group meetings after the last plenary meeting of 30 November 2023, although work has been ongoing.

2. HSPA IN THE COUNCIL WORKING PARTY (HIGH LEVEL)

The co-Chairs reported back to the HSPA Expert Group about the meeting of the Council Working Party on Public Health (High Level) on 9 February 2024, under the Belgian Presidency, where future work on HSPA was on the agenda. The Commission (DG SANTE Director C) and the Member State co-Chair of the HSPA Expert Group gave an overview of the past, current and upcoming work of the HSPA Expert Group. During the meeting, the Member States acknowledged the importance of the HSPA Group, they viewed the expanded mandate positively and there was an expressed interest in the current and future work topics, such as low-value care, health workforce and environmental impact of healthcare and additional topics including new technologies and AI.

3. STATE OF HEALTH IN THE EU

DG SANTE presented the State of Health in the EU 2023 Country Health Profiles and Synthesis Report referring to the tripartite partnership with OECD and The European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies. The main messages from the Synthesis report are: 1) action on mental health reforms addressing de-stigmatisation, prevention, treatment and reintegration needed, 2) closing health gaps by tackling health inequalities both across and within countries requires a multi-sectoral approach, and 3) investments towards resilient and accessible health systems need continuity, underpinned by robust data collection mechanisms. It was further mentioned that the Commission is currently working with OECD on Health at a Glance 2024 (expected publication in November/December 2024), with health workforce and longevity being the 2 thematic chapters.

Participants were also informed that a data visualisation tool is being developed for the deliverables of the State of Health in the EU project. Regarding how Member States use the country profiles at national level, several examples were mentioned including conferences, workshops and press articles and voluntary exchanges at the request of a Member States (there will be one in Zagreb, Croatia, on 23 April 2024). DG SANTE further informed that the reports are used internally as part of their work with the European Semester. DG SANTE thanked the HSPA members who had reviewed the country profiles.

4. PRIORITY TOPIC – VALUE-BASED HEALTHCARE

The European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies with the support of the Technical University of Berlin presented the draft report "Identifying, measuring and de-implementing low-value care in the context of health system performance assessment". The report is based on findings from a literature review and the previously discussed Member State survey (which was carried out between 11 December 2023 – 31 January 2024; 17 Member States and Norway provided their input). The draft report presents a framework typology of low-value care, proposes a new broader definition of low-value care and provides indicators with which Member States can identify low-value care, as well as examples how to reduce (de-implement) low-value care. The draft report also highlights opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and shared learning and stresses the need for development of further indicators.

The draft report was sent out to the participants 2 weeks before the meeting for their comments.

Following the presentation, several participants provided their input on the draft report. The proposed broader definition of low-value care was discussed, the presented typology was discussed in detail and participants asked for parts of the report to be further developed (especially the sections with examples and recommendations how to reduce low-value care). Representatives of the Commission asked to change the term 'de-implementing low-value care' to a more policy-friendly one, such as 'reducing low-value care'. All participants agreed that this subject (low-value care) is a complex one and that the draft report was a good starting point. They thanked the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies and the Technical University of Berlin for their work.

Participants were asked to provide their comments to the draft report in writing, to the Secretariat by 8 April. The co-Chairs suggested that a meeting of the subgroup on value-based healthcare be scheduled before the next plenary meeting to go through the feedback, and that a

revised draft report be shared with the HSPA Expert group in at least 2 weeks in advance of the next plenary meeting of 17 June.

5. PRIORITY TOPIC – HSPA GOVERNANCE

Member State rapporteur Germany informed that there has not been a subgroup meeting on HSPA governance, given that they are awaiting the update on the Member State survey and analysis of the HSPA development in the EU. The Technical University Berlin provided an update on the survey, including a brief recap of the main results (from the last plenary meeting of November 2023), article outline, developments of best practices and next steps. They informed that they have conducted a survey with member states, and that they want to further ask individual countries/experts for more qualitative data. The co-Chair asked them to let the Secretariat know which countries they will approach for transparency's sake.

The aim is to have a first draft of the article ready by the end of May (giving time to the HSPA to make comments), and to be discussed in the next HSPA plenary meeting in June, in order to finalise end of June.

6. PRIORITY TOPIC – HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE

Czechia and the Netherlands are rapporteurs for the priority topic healthcare workforce. Member State rapporteur Czechia presented the methodology and legislation for personnel standards and minimal personnel requirements for healthcare providers in the Czech healthcare system. The presentation included both pros and cons of having minimum staffing levels, with some challenges being the lack of flexibility within a legislative framework and the need to adapt to new technologies and models of care. The presentation was highly appreciated by the participants.

The co-rapporteur from the Netherlands asked the participants if they would like to work on developing indicators and metrics for health workforce planning. It was suggested to organise a subgroup meeting before the next plenary to plan the work and deliverables of this topic.

7. CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN MEMBER STATES

Belgian Health Care Knowledge Centre presented Belgium's HSPA report 2024, with a new conceptual framework of 142 indicators. The report includes a new dimension on resilience and governance, and a review on accessibility and people centred care. Future reports will include environmental sustainability. Their key success factors are 1) assessment by an independent team, 2) involvement of decision makers, 3) strong data collection system, and 4) validation by WHO, OECD and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies. Their website gathers recent reports and information/data on the health of the population and the healthcare system. Currently they update the report every 4 years, but the website includes information that is being updated regularly.

The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare presented their National Expert Assessment of the organization of healthcare and social welfare in wellbeing services counties in Finland (2023). The evaluation includes visualisation on how spending is used between different counties and on which types of services. A forecast to 2040 shows a development of increase in costs of services (i.e. healthcare and social welfare costs), particularly on services for older people. The key findings are: 1) there are considerable regional differences in the morbidity and age structure of the population, 2) deepening staff shortages challenge the timely availability of services, 3) operational construction continues in wellbeing services counties, 4) preparation of rebalancing programmes has started since accumulated deficit, 5) solutions are sought by developing operating practices and electronic services as well as by reforming service networks, and 6) the wellbeing services counties have been operating since 1 January 2023 and 7) the planning of the measures, decision-making and implementation takes time.

8. AOB & CONCLUSIONS OF THE MEETING

Conclusions and next steps:

- Low-value care:
 - Participants are to provide their comments to the draft report "Identifying, measuring and de-implementing low-value care in the context of health system performance assessment" in writing by 8 April to the Secretariat.
 - A subgroup meeting is to be organised before the next plenary meeting in June to discuss the comments with a view to sharing an updated draft e to be discussed at the next plenary meeting in June.
- HSPA governance:
 - A first draft of the article on the survey and analysis of the HSPA development in the EU is to be prepared by the end of May (giving time to the EG to make comments), and to be discussed in the next plenary meeting in June.
- Healthcare workforce:
 - A subgroup meeting is to be organised before the next plenary meeting in June to plan the work and deliverables on the suggested topic to develop indicators and metrics for health workforce planning.
- The Secretariat will liaise with the MS rapporteurs to schedule the meetings for the working groups.
- Czechia will host the next HSPA Expert Group meeting in Prague on 17 June 2024. Participants would also be able to attend online.

The co-Chairs closed the meeting and thanked everyone for the active participation and the interesting discussions.