



Flash Report Fourth meeting of the Public Health Expert Group (PHEG) 19 and 20 June 2024

The fourth meeting of the Public Health Expert Group (PHEG) took place on 19 and 20 June 2024. It was chaired by DG SANTE and attended by the representatives of **17 Member States¹, Norway and Iceland**, together with the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Progress made by the subgroups

DG SANTE presented the work of the subgroups (cancer, mental health, prevention of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and vaccination) under the PHEG, and of the Network of Expertise on long COVID. The PHEG approved the **prolongation of the vaccination subgroup's mandate** by 18 months. The PHEG **supported the launch of a call for best and promising practices on prevention**, mapping of prevention policies and updating the Healthier Together guidance document by including new focus on lifelong prevention.

Support by international organisations

The **OECD** informed on the ongoing and upcoming public health projects co-funded under the EU4Health Programme, including an analysis to gauge the economic impact of mental ill-health over the period 2023-2050. **WHO** presented the progress of its collaboration with DG SANTE in **supporting capacity building** in the Member States, Norway, and Iceland, as well as the collaboration in **the area of NCDs** and determinants of health. **UNICEF** presented the objectives of its new cooperation with DG SANTE to support **children's health**. The PHEG welcomed the initiatives with these organisations, praising the efforts to prepare convergent workstreams that result in useful tools for the countries and in a reinforced collaboration towards the same goals.

Policy priorities and policy coordination

PHEG discussed possible mechanisms to improve **policy coordination** through available tools and via collaboration in clusters of Member States on specific actions in the next 3-5 years. **The Member States supported this innovative collaborative approach** in general. They suggested looking at ways to strengthen health-in-all-policies and explore innovative approaches, such as strategic foresight, and creating common narratives on public health. DG SANTE will send a proposal of key areas to be considered to the Member States for feedback. The PHEG confirmed its support for a **horizontal, non-disease-specific approach to life long prevention of NCDs** as an efficient and sustainable way to address NCDs.

Opportunities for synergies

The PHEG was informed on the financing options of the **European Investment Bank** to the health sector in the EU and the readiness to assess proposals for financing packages of prevention interventions. **DG REFORM** provided an update on the **Technical Support Instrument (TSI)** and how Member States could benefit from the 2025 TSI projects to invest in resilient health systems and address demographic changes through reforms. The PHEG appreciated the Commission's support in ensuring synergies between financial tools for actions on health.

¹ Belgium; Czech Republic; Spain; France; Croatia; Italy; Cyprus; Latvia; Luxembourg; Hungary; Malta; the Netherlands; Portugal; Austria; Poland; Sweden; and Finland.



Ongoing and upcoming presidencies of the Council of the European Union

Belgium, Hungary and Poland briefed the PHEG on the results and plans related to their presidencies.

Message by DG SANTE Director-General

DG SANTE Director-General shared a message via the Chair, confirming that the PHEG is a key forum to discuss public health challenges. She expressed gratitude for the work carried out by the PHEG and its subgroups, and commended the cooperation across the Commission and with the EIB and international organisations.

Conclusion and next steps

The next online PHEG meeting is tentatively scheduled for 30 January 2025.