

Update on the Roadmaps for EC/WHO EURO collaboration

Title: Health Inequalities

Key elements of the Roadmap:

Overall Aims:

Implementation of the EU Strategy on reducing health inequalities – 'Solidarity in Health'

Taking forward the 2009 WHO Resolution "Reducing health inequalities through action on the social determinants of health".

Elements

- Support for Member States, Regions and other stakeholders to develop integrated policies and activities to address inequalities.
- Support for Member States, Regions and other stakeholders to develop policies and activities to develop an equity focus in specific policies which contribute to reducing health inequalities including: addressing determinants of health across the life course– including social and environmental determinants and health related behaviours particularly diet, physical activity, alcohol and tobacco use; prevention and management of chronic non communicable diseases (NCDs); health of particular population groups – including health of Roma.
- Capacity building, technical assistance, information sharing to address health inequalities.
- collaboration on gender and health.

Activities:

- ⤴ Regular contacts between SANCO and WHO EURO focal points, information sharing and collaboration on current and possible future activities in these areas.
- ⤴ Identified focal points for collaborating on key activities – such as the European health divide review, review of health inequalities in the EU, health of Roma, chronic non communicable diseases, health determinants, gender and health.
- ⤴ Routine involvement in meetings – including EU Expert Group on Social Determinants and Health Inequalities, WHO SDH Review meeting of Senior Advisors, NCD Focal Points meeting and networking
- ⤴ Joint activity on tools for policy making on health inequalities 2011-2013 and guidance for equity-based approaches on tobacco and alcohol.

Update on the progress made with the implementation of the Roadmap so far (context, main issues, most recent activities, upcoming activities, WHO/EC joint activities, opportunities for WHO/EC collaboration, other partners engaged or to be engaged etc)

There has been significant progress over the last 12 months with close collaboration on the following key elements:

- Rio Global Conference on Social Determinants of Health and its outcome document.
- UN High Level meeting on non communicable diseases and its political declaration.
- cooperation on the WHO review of the European Health Divide and the EU health

inequalities report.

- collaboration on WHO Environmental health inequalities report.
- agreement on jointly funded action on tools for policy making on health inequalities 2011-2013 and guidance for equity-based approaches on tobacco and alcohol – grant agreement signed December 2011.
- Development of actions on public health capacity building and on Roma health.

Major challenges (context, main issues) - only a minority of EU, or WHO European Member States have developed comprehensive plans to address health inequalities. - in many Member States there is little or no improvement in the incomes or quality of life amongst low income groups which is likely to make health inequalities worse. - the financial crisis is expected to further contribute to widening health inequalities between disadvantaged groups and the general population. - the gap in health between Member States is also very large (in the EU around 12 years for males and nearly 8 years for females). Low levels of health in some Member States is due to a combination of a legacy of poor economic performance contributing to less good living and working conditions; relatively low investment in health services and preventive care; and relatively poorly developed public health and social protection policies.

Future steps (expected results, suggestions on how to move forward, possible changes of direction required, specific objectives, subthemes to be covered etc)

- WHO and the European Commission will produce reports on the health inequalities situation in 2012. It will be important that these increase the impetus on Member States to develop effective policies.
- WHO and the European Commission will continue their work to support national and local strategies to address health inequalities – including cooperation on the EU joint action on health inequalities
- work will take place to explore synergies and define cooperation between WHO and the EC on Roma health.
- future action on chronic noncommunicable diseases needs to ensure an appropriate focus on reduce inequalities – particularly through policies which will have a greater beneficial effect on those populations which have the greatest needs and addressing the large differences in risk factors between social groups and between Member States.
- development of actions to address public health capacity building
- development of actions on health determinants in relation reducing chronic disease and addressing health inequalities
- further efforts are needed to protect health and social protection policies in times of budgetary pressure on Member States and ensure that health is seen as investment.
- the UN Political Declaration on NCDs calls for a comprehensive global monitoring framework with voluntary targets and indicators for NCD prevention and control. It also calls for the proposal of mechanisms for multisectoral partnership. It also sanctions the idea of 'best buys' for population approaches and for high-risk interventions. The adaptation of these developments to European realities and diversity is of joint interest.
- development of actions on gender and health

