



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Health systems, medical products and innovation
Performance of national health systems

Expert Panel on effective ways of investing in health (2019-2022)

8th plenary meeting

23 June 2021

14:00-17:00h CET

MS Teams

Minutes

The eighth plenary meeting of the Expert Panel on effective ways of investing in health (term of office 2019-2022) took place on 23 June 2021 virtually. The meeting, which was a non-public meeting, was chaired by the Panel's Chair, Professor Jan De Maeseneer.

1. Welcome and introduction

The agenda was approved without changes, the minutes of the previous plenary meeting of 28 April were approved earlier in writing and have been published on the Expert Panel website.

No conflicts of interest were raised on matters of the agenda.

2. Communication on the early lessons from the Covid-19 pandemic

The Commission (John Rowan, Deputy Head of unit Health, education & culture in the Secretariat-General) presented the key elements of the **Communication on the early lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic** that was adopted by the Commission on 15 June 2021.

Ten lessons focus on what has to be improved, how to better anticipate public health risks and enhance contingency planning leading to swifter and more effective joint responses at all levels.

COM stressed that the ten lessons are not exhaustive, but provide a first preview of what needs to be acted upon now for the benefit of all Europeans, namely:

- Design a new robust global surveillance system based on comparable data.
- Clearer and more coordinated scientific advice. The EU should appoint a European Chief Epidemiologist and a corresponding governance structure by the end of 2021.
- Enhance preparedness by constant investments, scrutiny and reviews. The European Commission should prepare an annual State of Preparedness Report.
- Emergency tools need to be ready faster and easier to activate.

- Coordinated measures should become a reflex for Europe.
- Public-private partnerships and stronger supply chains are needed to ensure the flow of critical equipment and medicines. A Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA) should be operational by early 2022 and a Health Important Project of Common European Interest should be set up as soon as possible to enable breakthrough innovation in pharmaceuticals.
- A pan-European approach to make clinical research faster, broader and more effective. A large-scale EU platform for multi-centre clinical trials should be established.
- Continuous and increased investment in health systems in order to cope in a pandemic. Member States should be supported to strengthen the overall resilience of health care systems as part of their recovery and resilience investments.
- Pandemic prevention, preparedness and response is a global priority for Europe,
- A more coordinated and sophisticated approach to tackling misinformation and disinformation should be developed.

Members welcomed the presentation and acknowledged the relevance of the information for the Panel, especially for the opinion on European solidarity in public health emergencies which is currently being drafted. They highlighted the importance to engage primary care, the local level and patients into decision making. They stressed the importance of flexibility in professional roles and the role of leadership during the crisis in order to react rapidly. The members also touched upon the distribution of competencies in the area of health and crisis preparedness.

COM underlined that this report on the early lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic will feed the leaders' discussion at the June European Council (24-25 June 2021). It will be presented to the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, and the Commission will follow up with concrete deliverables in the second half of 2021.

3. Opinion on European solidarity in public health emergencies

Members of the drafting group met on 25 May and 9 June. The virtual public hearing is scheduled for 5 July. The chair of the drafting group gave an update on the draft opinion and recapped the mandate. She stressed that the opinion is very complex.

COM underlined the need to clarify and correct certain assumptions in the draft opinion. Specifically, the role of EU instruments used during the pandemic such as the Emergency Support Instrument (ESI) and the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM). Members further discussed the recommendations, agreed that they should be neither too generic nor too specific. Given the amount of work and fine-tuning still to be done, members agreed to work further on the opinion and the recommendations, discuss them in an additional drafting group meeting and postpone the public hearing scheduled in July to September.

4. Opinion on mental health of health workforce and other essential workers

Members of the drafting group met on 11 May. The virtual public hearing on the draft opinion with stakeholders took place on 8 June with around 100 participants. The presentation and a

short summary report are available on the EXPH website. Comments received during the hearing and in writing were screened and, if relevant, taken into consideration.

The chair of the drafting group and rapporteurs gave an update on a final draft. COM thanked the drafting group for the work done on this opinion and welcomed the active engagement of stakeholders at the public hearing. COM stressed that it was important to reflect in the opinion and in the recommendations that a lot has been done already on mental health by the Commission and to take on board the work of the Health Policy Platform (HPP) stakeholder group ‘COVID-19: mental health support’, Steering Group on Health Promotion, Disease Prevention and Management of Non-Communicable Diseases (SGPP) and a conference ‘Mental health and the pandemic: living, caring, acting!’. COM reminded the panel that mental health is a national competence and this should be taken into account in the recommendations. COM also asked how the list of best practices were chosen for the proposed Annex.

In the discussion with panel members, it was agreed not to have an Annex. Panel members also reacted to the Commission comments and mentioned that it was not so easy to identify Commission projects and actions related to mental health and the workforce. The chair of the opinion concluded by thanking for the good discussion and that the two rapporteurs would update the opinion reflecting the discussion. On this basis, panel members approved the opinion. The fact sheet is being finalised and will be circulated later on for approval in writing.

5. Dissemination and promotion of opinions

COM informed the Panel about an action in the 2021 Work Programme of the EU4Health programme on developing resilience testing methodology and support programme. This action is a direct result of the recommendations from the Panel opinion on the Organisation of resilient health and social care following the COVID-19 pandemic. COM also informed about a planned workshop on resilience testing for the European Public Health Conference in November.

Regarding the dissemination of opinions, the opinion on Public procurement in healthcare systems will be presented at the next meeting of the expert group on public procurement in health care in October.

Several members have presented the different opinions at various events and some more presentations are planned.

To promote the mental health opinion the members of the drafting group submitted an abstract from the mental health opinion that was accepted for a short policy debate at the European Forum for Primary Care. It will be held online on 6 -7 September. Further, the members of the group submitted an application for a workshop on the mental health opinion at the European Public Health Conference in November.

Members also published an article ‘Resilience Testing of Health Systems: How Can It Be Done?’ in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health (IJERPH) as part of the Special Issue Sustainability and Resilience in Health: The Role of Performance

Management. This was based on the opinion on the organisation of resilient health and social care following the COVID-19 pandemic.

6. Update on the Union Civil protection mechanism and its role to promote European solidarity

COM (DG ECHO) presented the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) and its role to promote European solidarity. They explained that UCPM supports the deployment of all kinds of national emergency response capacities in disaster situations, upon request for assistance by an affected State or international organization.

Regarding the health area, the European Medical Corps (EMC) gathers all health-related capacities enabling quick medical assistance and health expertise from all EU Member States and Participating States to a health emergency inside and outside the EU. The assistance to India has been the biggest UCPM operation so far. COM highlighted that as stated in the Regulation (EU) 2021/836 amending Decision No 1313/2013/EU the Union Mechanism shall promote solidarity between the Member States through practical cooperation and coordination, and, on the basis of the principles of solidarity and universal coverage of quality health services, the UCPM should contribute to improving prevention, preparedness and response capacity also in respect of medical emergencies.

COM further gave some examples of solidarity during the COVID-19 pandemic, namely the crisis assistance through donations of medical equipment (e.g. masks, ventilators, therapeutics), medical teams, cross-border treatments of ill patients, bringing stranded EU citizens home, vaccine sharing (Romania to Moldova). COM concluded by stressing the importance of cross sectoral cooperation as well as assistance outside the EU.

7. Any other business and next steps

The chair thanked all participants and, before closing the meeting, reminded members that the next plenary meeting is scheduled for 22 September via MS Teams.

8. List of participants

MEMBERS

BARROS PITA Pedro
DE MAESENEER Jan
GARCIA-ALTES Anna
GRUSON Damien
KRINGOS Dionne
LEHTONEN Lasse
LIONIS Christos
MCKEE Martin
MURASKIENE Liubove
NUTI Sabina (apologies)
ROGERS Heather
SICILIANI Luigi
WIECZOROWSKA-TOBIS Katarzyna

ZACHAROV Sergej

ZALETEL Jelka

COM

ROWAN John (SG)

PRADALIE Nicholas (SG)

DROGOWSKA Joanna (ECHO)

ZANATTA Sofia (ECHO)

JULLY Alexandre (ECHO)

MATTHEWS Maya (SANTE)

DAJKA Bela (SANTE)

VOLOSINOVA Viera (SANTE)