



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)**

**31<sup>ST</sup> MEETING**

**30 NOVEMBER 2023, 10:00 – 16:15**

*VIRTUAL PLENARY MEETING*

**MEETING MINUTES**

Participants:

Virtual: 22 EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Slovenia, Slovakia, Sweden, Norway, OECD, WHO Europe, the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, and European Commission (DG SANTE, DG RTD and DG REFORM).

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

\* \* \*

**1. OPENING OF THE MEETING**

The co-Chairs opened the meeting and welcomed participants to the 31<sup>st</sup> plenary meeting of the HSPA Expert Group.

After a round of introductions, the co-Chairs briefly mentioned the actions which took place since the 30<sup>th</sup> meeting in Rome in June 2023, specifically: the subgroup meetings on all five identified priority topics which took place on 22 and 28 September 2023, as well as a meeting of the subgroup on value-based healthcare on 27 October 2023. The co-Chairs also informed that a meeting of the Council Working Party on Public Health (High Level) will take place during 8-9 February 2024 under the Belgian Presidency, where a discussion on Health Systems Performance Assessment is planned.

**2. PRIORITY TOPIC – VALUE-BASED HEALTHCARE**

The Member State co-Chair provided more feedback on the subgroup meeting on value-based healthcare of 27 October 2023, where the first chapter of the report (literature review) was discussed as well as a preliminary approach for a Member State survey on low-value care. The Expert Group received an updated draft of the literature review as well as a draft Member State survey for discussion.

The European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (with the Technical University of Berlin) presented their draft report on “Identifying, measuring and de-implementing low-value care in the context of health systems performance assessment”. During this presentation, potential indicators for measuring low-value care in several areas were outlined, including in diagnostic and preventive testing; screening; medication; as well as in unwarranted geographical variation in healthcare delivery. A draft Member State survey on identifying, measuring and de-implementing low-value care was also presented.

There was active discussion on identifying a set of relevant indicators for measuring low-value care. It was agreed to carry out the Member State survey between approximately 7 December 2023 and 22 January 2024, so that the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies can deliver a full draft report on low-value care by 4 March 2024. This will then be discussed at the next plenary meeting of the HSPA Expert Group.

### **3. HSPA WORKPLAN AND FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION ON FUTURE PRIORITY TOPICS**

The Commission co-Chair recalled that in the 30<sup>th</sup> meeting of the HSPA Expert Group in Rome on 28 June 2023, it was decided that each subgroup works on and further defines an Action Plan for each of the identified priority topics: HSPA governance, healthcare workforce, environmental impact on healthcare, mental health, and inequalities in healthcare. Each subgroup rapporteur reported back on the subgroup meeting and the state of play of the respective Action Plans, which are not all at the same level of development.

#### **Priority topic: HSPA governance:**

Member State rapporteur Germany presented the Action Plan on HSPA governance. This Action Plan focuses on the following key points: (1) mapping of HSPA governance in the EU: survey initiated by Germany, results currently analysed by the Technical University of Berlin; (2) definition of process and methodology for HSPA governance; (3) support countries with the set-up of HSPA frameworks.

The Technical University of Berlin, which has been commissioned to carry out a Member State survey on how HSPA is carried out in EU countries, gave an update on this survey. Results show wide variety of HSPA development across the EU. For instance, 12 Member States indicated that they have HSPA in place. The survey concluded that most countries expect a positive impact of HSPA on health policy in the next decade.

A report is planned to be shared in the next plenary session of the HSPA Expert Group and an article will also be published by the Technical University of Berlin.

Participants agreed that the Member State survey on how HSPA is managed in the EU serves as a good starting point to develop capacity building and methodological support.

#### **Priority topic: Healthcare workforce:**

Czechia and the Netherlands are rapporteurs for the priority topic healthcare workforce. Member State rapporteur Czechia presented the Action Plan. Topics to focus on include (1) health workforce shortages with emphasis on primary care and (2) methods of benchmarking of minimum/optimal staffing levels. The Action Plan on healthcare workforce also draws

attention to two EU funded projects on health workforce, namely the Joint Action HEROES on health workforce forecasting and planning, and the BeWell multi-stakeholder partnership on digital and green skills for the health workforce.

It was decided to work on mapping the different methodologies used by Member States for optimising/benchmarking staffing levels.

**Priority topic: Environmental impact on healthcare:**

Member State rapporteur Ireland presented the Action Plan on the environmental impact on healthcare, which suggests concentrating on three main areas: (1) exchange of best practices, experiences and lessons learnt on mitigating the health systems' impact on environment and climate change; (2) mapping of data available across countries to calculate greenhouse gas emissions via a country survey; (3) identification of indicators to monitor the impact of health systems on the environment and climate.

This subgroup identified several other organisations and partnerships working on this issue such as: the 'Environment and Health Partnership on Health Sector Climate Action' aiming to provide a regional community of practice to support countries' efforts in line with the COP26 Health Programme (to which the WHO European Region provides a secretariat), Health Care Without Harm, the Global Health Alliance and the OECD. Hence, the Member State rapporteur emphasised the importance of ensuring that work is not duplicated.

It was acknowledged that more work and engagement with other relevant organisations and initiatives is required to further refine the proposed Action Plan.

**Priority topic: Mental health:**

The HSPA Secretariat presented the Action Plan on mental health (in the absence of the Member State rapporteur from Romania), which is still work in progress and not finalised. However, innovation is the key element in the two areas identified for possible action, namely: (1) innovative ways for delivering mental health services; and (2) new ways and sources for monitoring and data collection for mental health.

Furthermore, in order to share information, and avoid any duplication, the HSPA subgroup on mental health will hold a joint meeting with the subgroup on mental health of the Public Health Expert Group of the European Commission.

**Priority topic: Inequalities in healthcare:**

Member State rapporteur Italy informed that the subgroup on inequalities in healthcare discussed EU4Health projects as follow-up actions to the HSPA Expert Group's report on access to healthcare, as well as Italy's initiative on Health Equity Audits in a regional prevention plan, in its meeting in September 2023.

Outcomes of this discussion led to two potential future activities: (1) a webinar to allow the exchange of practices aimed at tackling inequalities in access to healthcare and (2) a survey to map monitoring methodologies and systems to measure inequalities in healthcare access.

**Decision on the order of future priority topics of the HSPA Expert Group and next steps:**

The HSPA Expert Group selected ‘HSPA governance’ and ‘health workforce’ as two topics to commence work in 2024. For the remaining three topics, the subgroups will continue developing their Action Plans during 2024 and report back to a future plenary meeting (e.g. in June or in Autumn 2024).

Germany also raised the question about the use of predictive models and artificial intelligence in HSPA and whether this could be an area of interest for the HSPA Expert Group. Meeting participants were invited to send ideas on whether they would see these areas emerging as a future work topic.

The co-Chairs also informed that they would attend the upcoming Public Health Expert Group on 6 December 2023 and inform about the priority topics of the HSPA Expert Group.

#### **4. DEVELOPMENTS IN HSPA FRAMEWORKS AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL**

The WHO and European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies have revised their HSPA framework and also developed a dashboard to operationalise the framework. The new HSPA framework will be presented at the WHO 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tallinn Charter conference on Health Systems on 12-13 December 2023.

The OECD have also revised their HSPA framework, which will be presented in January 2024 at the OECD Health Ministerial conference.

Both frameworks are introducing new performance dimensions related to aspects such as health workforce, people-centredness, digital tools, societal well-being and inequalities, resilience and environmental sustainability of health systems.

#### **5. CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN MEMBER STATES**

Austria, as coordinator of the WHO Action Network on Measuring Population and Organisational Health Literacy (M-POHL), presented the network and the first European Health Literacy Survey (HLS19), confirming health literacy as a critical determinant of health. This underlines the significance of investing in measuring and improving health literacy. Health Literacy Surveys can be important information sources to influence policy decisions concerning health promotion, disease prevention and healthcare utilisation.

#### **6. AOB & CONCLUSIONS OF THE MEETING**

##### **Conclusions and next steps:**

- Low value care:
  - Meeting participants agreed to send comments to the draft literature review and Member State survey on low-value care by 4 December 2023.
  - The Member State survey on identifying, measuring and de-implementing low-value care will be launched by approximately 7-8 December 2023, with a deadline to reply by 22 January 2024.
  - In terms of work plan: the HSPA Expert Group to conclude the work on low-value care in first half of 2024.
- Priority topics:
  - Agreed to focus on two topics in 2024 (a) HSPA governance and (b) healthcare workforce.

- Agreed to continue developing the Action Plans for the topics of ‘environmental impact on healthcare’, ‘mental health’ and ‘inequalities in healthcare’.
- Predictive models and artificial intelligence to be discussed as potentially new work areas of the HSPA Expert Group. Meeting participants to send ideas on whether they would see these areas emerging as a future work topic.
- A discussion on HSPA will take place at the Council Working Party on Public Health (High Level) on 8-9 February 2024. A discussion paper will be circulated by the Belgian Presidency.
- The next meeting of the HSPA Expert Group is planned on 21 March 2024 and will be online (virtual).
- In June 2024, Czechia will host the HSPA Expert Group in Prague in person (hybrid, and date to be defined).

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