

Terms of reference for an expert group on health systems performance assessment

Rationale

In the Council Conclusions on the reflection process on modern, responsive and sustainable health systems, adopted on 10.12.2013¹, Member States and the Commission were invited to improve the coordination on health systems performance assessment (HSPA) at EU level by streamlining the debate on HSPA frameworks, identifying useful methodologies and tools to support policy makers in taking decisions, and defining criteria for selecting priority areas for HSPA at EU level and improving the availability and quality of relevant data and information.

Following this, on 18.02.2014, the Working Party on Public Health at Senior Level recommended to follow up on its work to improve policy-usefulness, coordination and exchange of best practices at EU level in the field of HSPA and it called for involvement of all Member States in this exercise. In this regard, the Working Party proposed the setting up of an expert group on HSPA with the purpose of assisting national policy makers in the use of HSPA to identify if and where improvements are needed in their system. The outcome of this process was to identify together tools and methodologies for Member States, which might be implemented in order to further improve their health systems performance. Moreover, this process aimed to search for ways to improve comparability of information through an agreed working framework.

The Council in its Conclusions on the economic crisis and healthcare, adopted on 20.06.2014², confirmed its interest and invited Member States and the Commission to continue to strengthen the effectiveness of health systems through identifying tools and methodologies for HSPA, the exchange of best practice and better use of existing data such as Eurostat and OECD statistics.

The Expert Group on Health Systems Performance Assessment (HSPA) was set up to respond to these invitations.

Sweden was the first Member State to co-chair this group together with the Commission from 2014 to 2016. Afterwards, Belgium assumed the Member State co-chairing role from 2016 to 2018, with Malta currently co-chairing from 2018 until the present time.

More recently, the Council in its Conclusions on “strengthening the European Health Union”, adopted on 07.12.2021³, invited Member States and the Commission to explore the potential of this Expert Group to address strategic approaches to health system innovation and transformation. At the Working Party on Public Health (High Level) on 09.12.2021, the Commission was invited to prepare a proposal to update the Terms of Reference of the Expert

¹ OJ C 376, 21.12.2013, p.3

² OJ C 2017, 10.7.2014, p. 2

³ OJ C 512I, 20.12.2021, p. 2–11

Group on HSPA in order to support a more strategic approach in fostering collaboration for innovative solutions and transforming health systems.

The Expert Group endorsed the revised Terms of Reference on its plenary meeting on 28 June 2022 and agreed to formally submit them for information to the meeting of the Working Party on Public Health (High level) on 26 July 2022. During the Working Party on Public Health (High Level) on 26 July 2022, Member States welcomed the updated Terms of Reference.

Mission

The Expert Group on Health Systems Performance Assessment (HSPA) aims to reach the following concrete objectives:

1. Provide participating Member States with a forum for exchange of experience and best practices on the use of HSPA at national level.
2. Support national policy-makers by identifying tools and methodologies for developing HSPA.
3. Define priority areas for HSPA at national level, as well as priority areas that could be assessed EU-wide in order to illustrate and better understand variations in the performance of national health systems.
4. Provide participating Member States with a forum to discuss and promote strategic innovative approaches to strengthening health systems.
5. Intensify EU cooperation with international organisations, in particular the OECD, the WHO and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies.

Membership

Each Member State is invited to voluntarily appoint up to two representatives to the Expert Group. EEA countries (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein), the OECD, the WHO and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies are also invited to participate as observers in the work of the group.

The European Commission is a member too.

Operation

The Expert Group is co-chaired by the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) and a Member State (Malta at the present time).

The Expert Group adopts its rules of procedures on the basis of a proposal from the Commission, at the simple majority of its members.

In carrying out its work, the Expert Group will liaise with other actors that deal with health systems performance within the European Commission, in order to avoid duplication and take advantage of synergies. The Expert Group should take into consideration the activities carried out by the Economic Policy Committee on the sustainability of health systems; the Social Protection Committee with regard to the Joint Assessment Framework on health; the Commission's Scientific Committees on 'Consumer Safety' and on 'Health, Environmental and Emerging Risks'; the Steering Group on Health Promotion, Disease Prevention and Management of Non-Communicable Diseases; the outcomes of HSPA projects funded by the Technical Support Instrument; the work of the HSPA Community of Practice; the findings of EU-funded research projects on HSPA; the outcomes of relevant Health Programme and EU4Health projects (such as Joint Actions on transfer of best practices); and the activities of the planned European Partnership on Transforming Health and Care Systems.

Secretariat

DG SANTE shall provide secretarial support for the Expert Group.

Tasks

1. In order to achieve the first objective (provide participating Member States with a forum for exchange of experience and best practices on the use of HSPA at national level) the expert group will:

- Organise open exchanges (in form of meetings, conferences, symposia, peer review meetings etc.) of experiences and best practices on the development and use of HSPA-tools in the Member States.

- Provide a pool of HSPA experts with which Member States can consult regarding their specific needs.

2. In order to achieve the second objective (support national policy-makers by identifying tools and methodologies for developing HSPA) the Expert Group will:

- In conjunction with other organisations, including the OECD, the WHO and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, define and develop conceptual HSPA frameworks, identifying the main dimensions/domains of the health system (e.g. effectiveness, equity, etc.), and the appropriate indicators to populate the frameworks.

- Carry out surveys and research at Member State level, on specific HSPA issues.

- Provide relevant background analysis to support policy making.

3. In order to achieve the third objective (define priority areas for HSPA at national level, as well as priority areas that could be assessed EU-wide in order to illustrate and better understand variations in the performance of national health systems) the Expert Group will:

- Define priority areas for HSPA work at national and EU level

- Organise open exchange of knowledge and good practice on the defined priority areas, aiming at identifying common factors of success that are replicable in other systems.

- Identify appropriate and effective means of communicating the findings and the reports of the Expert Group.

4. In order to achieve the fourth objective (provide participating Member States with a forum to discuss and promote strategic innovative approaches to strengthening health systems) the Expert Group will:

- Identify best practices and organise open exchanges of experiences and lessons learnt on health system innovations and transformation in the Member States.

- Organise policy dialogues and peer reviews, and draft policy briefs and non-binding recommendations to inform the national reform agendas on a purely advisory basis.

5. In order to achieve the fifth objective (Intensify EU cooperation with international organisations, in particular the OECD, the WHO and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies) the Expert Group will:

- Attend relevant meetings held by the OECD, the WHO and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies on health systems performance assessment, health systems innovation and health systems transformation;

- As part of the report to the Working Party on Public Health (High Level), inform on the progress made regarding collaboration between organisations in HSPA, and in health systems innovation and transformation; regarding existing gaps; and regarding opportunities for joint work and synergies.

Reporting

The Expert Group will report yearly to the Council Working Party on Public Health (High Level).