

New evidence is needed to measure what really matters to people

WHO and many countries have experienced a paradigm shift in public health, with the focus moving from death and disease to health and well-being. This means that more weight should be given in health information to qualitative and subjective data – such as life satisfaction – to reflect this shift.

Research shows that subjective well-being data are robust and valuable at the local and national levels, particularly as predictive indicators of health. The experience of well-being, however, is strongly influenced by cultural contexts, and more research is needed to understand this connection. This will probably result in new indicators and may lead to the development of a measurement of the cultural determinants of health.

The Health 2020 monitoring framework adopted by the 53 Member States in the European Region comprises a combination of standard quantitative indicators and qualitative indicators on policy development. Many **new concepts in the Health 2020 policy, however, have never been routinely measured**, so a broader scope that covers those concepts is needed to monitor the implementation of the policy in its entirety.

What new evidence is required?

Health 2020 includes new concepts that challenge the understanding of measurement and the way it is done. These include transparency, community resilience, supportive environments, sense of belonging, the whole-of-society approach, participatory governance, the life-course approach, empowerment, people-centred health systems, intersectorality, the whole-of-government approach and adaptive policies, among others.

Existing knowledge can be used to develop measurements and indicators for these concepts. Rather than overburdening countries with new data collections, relevant types of existing evidence need to be identified; this involves using information from other disciplines, including qualitative measures and narrative approaches. The WHO Regional Office for Europe is working with Member States on a mechanism and roadmap to monitor these concepts enshrined in the Health 2020 policy, **thus shaping new evidence for the 21st century**.

KEY FACTS

Europe is moving from reporting on death and disease to measuring health and well-being

- **The good news:** data are available on well-being in European countries; it can be monitored regularly.
- **The challenge:** research is needed to increase understanding of how culture affects well-being and how to measure its impact.

Europeans are embracing Health 2020

- **The good news:** with more and more countries adopting the Health 2020 policy, health outcomes are improving in the Region.
- **The challenge:** the new concepts outlined in Health 2020 – such as community resilience, intersectorality, empowerment and others – require monitoring, but suitable indicators and data sources need to be identified.

Health 2020 implementation is being monitored everywhere in Europe

- **The good news:** all countries in Europe are gathering information for the existing Health 2020 monitoring framework.
- **The challenge:** not all countries report regularly to WHO with high-quality data – this needs to change.

Europeans are joining forces to improve and harmonize health information

- **The good news:** WHO, its Member States and stakeholders have established the European Health Information Initiative to develop a single health information system for Europe.
- **The challenge:** continuing strengthened coordination and international cooperation are needed to achieve this goal.



How will this new evidence be acquired?

Harmonizing existing data and facing the health information challenges for new evidence will require strong international cooperation and sharing of knowledge. To achieve this, the Regional Office has established a country-driven network – the European Health Information Initiative (EHII). This initiative is committed to enhancing the health of people in the Region by improving the information that underpins policy. It supports the development of a single integrated health information system for Europe and has a concrete plan for its six core activities. The plan is supported by the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

What happens next?

Momentum for the EHII is growing. Alongside 11 Member States, a charitable foundation, academic institutions and two WHO collaborating centres have joined the initiative and are supporting it actively.

However, **more members are needed** to strengthen the network and increase its capacity to **ensure that health information collections are improved at country level** and activities harmonized across all six key areas of the EHII plan of work. **Please join us in the EHII** and work towards a single health information system for Europe!

EHII key areas

- 1 Development of information for health and well-being with a focus on indicators
- 2 Improved access to and dissemination of health information
- 3 Capacity building
- 4 Strengthening of health information networks
- 5 Support for health information strategy development
- 6 Communications and advocacy