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Health systems for health and wealth in the context of Health 2020: follow-up to the 2008 Tallinn Charter



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Health systems for health and wealth in the context of Health 2020: follow-up to the 2008 Tallinn Charter

Tallinn, Estonia, 17–18 October 2013

1. To mark the five-year anniversary of the signing of *The Tallinn Charter: Health Systems for Health and Wealth*, a high-level technical meeting on “Health systems for health and wealth in the context of Health 2020: follow-up to the 2008 Tallinn Charter” was convened by the WHO Regional Office for Europe and generously hosted by the Ministry of Social Affairs of Estonia. The meeting provided a platform for investigating new ways to improve population health, exchanging inspiring examples of health systems strengthening and agreeing on future directions, weaving together the commitments in the Tallinn Charter and the Health 2020 policy framework.

2. The “WHO European Ministerial Conference on Health Systems: Health Systems for Health and Wealth” held in Tallinn, Estonia, in June 2008 underscored the importance that Member States placed on improving the performance of their health systems. They marked their political commitment by signing the Tallinn Charter and later endorsed it in Regional Committee resolution EUR/RC58/R4 on “Stewardship/governance of health systems in the WHO European Region”.

3. The Tallinn Charter highlights themes central to health systems strengthening. Its signatories pledged to “invest in health systems and foster investments across sectors that influence health, using evidence on the links between socioeconomic development and health”. The Charter strongly emphasizes value-driven policy design, reaffirming the core values of solidarity and equity. This commitment is clearly expressed in the Charter’s statement on universal health coverage, “Today, it is unacceptable that people become impoverished because of ill health.”

4. Ministers, experts and delegates from 38 Member States and representatives of partners including the European Commission, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the World Bank attended the high-level meeting to describe the steps they had taken to implement the Tallinn Charter and to move towards providing universal health coverage.

5. Keynote addresses, ministerial panels and plenary discussions during the two-day meeting took stock of implementation of the commitments in the Tallinn Charter and proposed

ways to strengthen health systems through the lens of Health 2020. Discussions during these sessions highlighted a number of themes.

- A whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach will ensure transparency, accountability and shared political and civic commitment. A common vision must be communicated and used as a basis for all initiatives in health systems strengthening.
 - Changing health needs across the Region, with the increasing burden of chronic diseases and the growing rate of co- and multimorbidities, require more continuous treatment and proactive initiatives to address people's health status.
 - The organization of health services must be transformed to offer more coordinated, integrated pathways for providing the full continuum of care services according to patients' needs and preferences.
 - Greater commitment to public health is required to promote health and reduce inequalities. Public health in primary health care should be shown to be a unique tool for strengthening services and securing gains in social, community, family and individual health.
 - Modern technology should be harnessed to improve communication, strengthen data collection and empower patients to manage their health. Participants from the host country shared the experience of the Estonian health system in using e-health to engage patients.
 - New, innovative approaches to health systems financing are needed that are aligned to service delivery models adapted to health trends and the economic climate.
6. In discussing these themes, participants identified two cross-cutting challenges:
- strengthening human resources for health, aligning skills and competence to secure more coordinated, integrated approaches to service delivery; and
 - modernizing information systems and knowledge transfer to respond to the continuously increasing volume of data supplied through modern technologies.
7. Member States also reported experience with measures to improve accountability and governance, for example, by assessing the performance of their health systems. Tobacco and alcohol control were reported to be areas in which there are effective, evidence-based, cross-sectoral policies. The sharing of experience and expertise was highlighted as a means to promote learning and long-term collaboration.
8. The outcomes of the high-level meeting will be included in a final report on implementation of the commitments of the Tallinn Charter and a draft resolution on the main strategic directions with regard to health systems in the context of Health 2020 for 2015–2020 will be presented to the 65th session of the Regional Committee for Europe (RC) in 2015.
9. At a session chaired by the Director-General for Healthcare facilities organization, Federal Public Service, Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment in Belgium, the Regional Director launched a plan for work on the framework for action towards coordinated/integrated health services delivery. The goal of the framework is to support countries in drafting policy options and recommendations to strengthen the coordination and integration of their health services. This work is in line with the vision of Health 2020 and the values of universal health coverage: the delivery of care must be of high quality and people-centred to ensure better health and equity. Throughout the meeting, participants emphasized the importance of making health services delivery more people-centred and agreed that coordination and integration of delivery was a key approach.

10. A roadmap has been drafted by the Regional Office to describe the phases in the development of the framework for action towards coordinated/integrated health services delivery up to 2016. It emphasizes the importance of ensuring the participation of partners, including a network of focal points in Member States, external experts and leading organizations in the field, such as the International Foundation for Integrated Care.

11. At the second session of the Twenty-first Standing Committee of the Regional Committee for Europe (SCRC) in Malta in December 2013, the members of the SCRC agreed to the following actions with respect to the high-level meeting and implementation of the commitments of the Tallinn Charter:

- the establishment of a core group representing selected Member States and partners to support the Division of Health Systems and Public Health at the Regional Office to monitor countries' progress in implementing the commitments of the Tallinn Charter; and
- the Division of Health Systems and Public Health to prepare a proposal on health systems strengthening in the context of Health 2020 for 2015–2020 to be presented to RC65 in 2015.

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