
Liège statement on the new European policy for health and well-being Health 2020

Initial consultation with local governments on Health 2020 in Liège, with 322 participants from 30 European countries and 95 cities

We, the mayors and senior political representatives of cities in the European Region gathered at the Annual Business and Technical Conference of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network and the Network of National Healthy Cities Networks in Liège, Belgium, 15-18 June 2011:

recognize the complex and rapidly changing array of global, regional and national forces such as the economic recession, climate change, urbanization, poverty, our ageing populations and migration and developments in technology and communication that are rapidly reshaping health and the social, and economic landscapes of our cities and creating new opportunities and challenges in our common pursuit for health and well-being;

welcome the bold and timely initiative of the WHO Regional Office for Europe to catalyse and facilitate the development of a new common European policy for health and well-being - Health 2020 - that can unite, align and strengthen our individual and collective capacity to take action for health and health equity at the European Region, national and local levels; and

applaud the policy's emphasis on practical problem-solving based on values, evidence and assets; its commitment to whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches; its strong focus on health as a human right; the right to participation and transparency in decision-making; and its identifying effective and efficient ways to address the health challenges of our cities, including the social determinants of health, inequities across the social gradient, the noncommunicable disease epidemic, mental health and injuries. Setting common targets will provide critically important tools for monitoring and accountability.

Recommendations

Building on local government knowledge and experience of the needs, assets and daily health and well-being challenges of our populations and our extensive inter-sectoral experience in developing and implementing city health plans, we **recommend** that the Health 2020 process and policy:

- explicitly **recognize** the key role of local governments and the importance of delivery at the local level and identifying public health issues that can be best addressed locally;
- **promote** active partnership with local governments, nongovernmental organizations, academe and the business community;
- **emphasize** the need for cross-party consensus and support for health policies;
- **provide** specific tools to promote effective governance for health: health impact assessment, transparency, inter-sectoral work and accountability;
- **strengthen** the capacity and expertise of local governments to promote citizen participation and empowerment and the needs of vulnerable groups;
- **provide** guidance for promoting a socially responsible business sector;
- **catalyse** research on health effects and sound economic analysis of various models and interventions of national support to local governments related to devolving responsibilities and authority in health and well-being;
- **address** issues related to sustainable development, migration, ageing, cultural and ethnic diversity, biodiversity and climate change in urban and rural settings;
- **ensure** relevance, delivery and adaptability of policy recommendations to all parts of the European Region through continued active consultation with cities across the Region;
- **craft** Health 2020 in a way that speaks clearly, simply and inspirationally to a broad European audience, including young people; and
- **recognize** the potential of healthy cities networks to be effective vehicles for delivering the Health 2020 policy.

Commitment

This new common health policy framework creates a fresh, dynamic and exciting platform for enhanced influence and impact of a better coordinated and focused public health community. This is our time. To this end, we **commit** ourselves to be **proactive partners** in the development and consultation process; to be a **testing ground** for new ideas; to be a source of local knowledge and case studies; and to actively advocate for our common health vision and goals.

This document is submitted to WHO on behalf of the political leaders of the participating cities by George Pire, Political Head for Health of the Province of Liège

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