



South-eastern Europe Health Network
Health Development Action for South-eastern Europe

**Eleventh Meeting of
Senior Government Officials of Countries
in South-eastern Europe**

Report on a Joint Council of Europe/WHO meeting
Sofia, Bulgaria, 30 September 2005



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Introduction

The Eleventh Meeting of Senior Government Officials of Countries from South-eastern Europe (South-eastern Europe Health Network: Health Development Action for South-eastern Europe) was jointly organized by the Council of Europe and the WHO Regional Office for Europe in cooperation with the Council of Europe Development Bank and the kind support of the Government of Bulgaria. This meeting is an activity of the political process in the health sector in implementation as a follow-up to the Dubrovnik Pledge of the health ministers of the eight countries in south-eastern Europe and in the framework of the Initiative for Social Cohesion of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

The Eleventh Meeting of the Health Network in Bulgaria is the second, after Banja Luka, of a new cycle started after the first cycle of meetings of the Network was completed in all the countries with the Ninth Meeting of the Health Network in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova. This cycle has enhanced considerably the knowledge by the members of the health and social situation in all the countries of the region and the mutual respect and trust between the members.

A strong coalition in service of the health needs of vulnerable populations in south-eastern Europe has been established under the umbrella of the Initiative for Social Cohesion of the Stability Pact. This has become possible because of:

- the commitment, motivation, leadership and involved participation of the eight countries in south-eastern Europe, beneficiaries of the Stability Pact process;
- the genuine political and technical support of the neighbouring countries Greece, Hungary and Slovenia;
- the generosity of the donor partners: Belgium, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Slovenia and Switzerland; and
- the extended and continuous political, technical, managerial and financial support of the Council of Europe, the Council of Europe Development Bank, the Stability Pact Secretariat and the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

The Health Network has become a recognized vehicle for achieving the goals of the Dubrovnik Pledge, with the exemplary partnership of WHO Regional Office for Europe and the Council of Europe, being supported by the Council of Europe Development Bank and politically coordinated by the Initiative for Social Cohesion of the Stability Pact. The international community is acknowledging these developments.

The national political health coordinators of the eight countries in south-eastern Europe convened the Eleventh Meeting of the Health Network on 1 October 2005 in Sofia, Bulgaria. The joint Council of Europe/WHO Regional Office for Europe Secretariat organized the meeting with the kind support of the Ministry of Health of Bulgaria. Representatives of the Council of Europe Development Bank and donor countries participated.

Snezana Cicevalieva, Chairperson of the Operational Task Force, chaired the meeting, and Alexandre Berlin acted as rapporteur. Annex 1 lists the participants.

The Meeting focused on preparing the Second Health Ministers' Forum for South-eastern Europe in Skopje in 2005 by addressing:

- mechanisms for regional collaboration for health: draft memorandum of understanding for Skopje; and
- the draft *Report on health and economic development in south-eastern Europe*.

Report on *Health and economic development in south-eastern Europe*

Donata Favaro, Ivana Bozicevic and Bernd Rechel presented the current state of preparation of three of the chapters of this key document for the Second Health Ministers' Forum:

- health trends in south-eastern Europe: why and how ill health influences economic development (Donata Favaro);
- health in south-eastern Europe: recent trends, patterns and socioeconomic inequalities in health (Ivana Bozicevic); and
- health systems and policies in south-eastern Europe (Bernd Rechel).

They focused their presentations on the main findings of their respective studies.

The Health Network appreciated the presentations but made the following comments:

- Very short, maximum two-page summaries with a more political content and simplified wording are to be prepared on each chapter for the Second Health Ministers' Forum with a close link between them, preferably only one paper.
- There should be clear messages for the ministers.
- There should be no recommendations: only, if necessary, some conclusions.
- More examples should be given of good practices in the region, as a positive approach.
- Comparisons should be made not solely with the 15 countries that were members of the European Union before 1 May 2004 but also with the 10 countries joining the European Union on 1 May 2004.
- Martin McKee should make the presentation at the Second Health Ministers' Forum – essential.

Memorandum of understanding

At the Tenth Meeting of the Health Network, it was agreed, following in-depth discussion that the Secretariat (WHO Regional Office for Europe) and the Chair of the Operational Task Force would prepare a draft for circulation to the Health Network members and discussion at this meeting. The comments received were presented, and further extensive discussion took place. A new draft of the memorandum of understanding was prepared (Annex 2) for urgent circulation to the ministers for agreement.

Next meetings

The Twelfth Meeting of the Health Network will take place in Skopje on 24 November 2005 in the afternoon just before the Second Health Ministers' Forum for South-eastern Europe. It will be preceded in the morning by the eighth meeting of the Operational Task Force.

Annex 1

List of Participants

Members of the South-eastern Europe Health Network

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Strategic Country Support

Annex 2

Programme

Friday, 30 September

14:30 – 16:30

Opening

- Welcome addresses
- Adoption of agenda and programme

Plenary session 1:

Draft Skopje Memorandum of Understanding on mechanisms for regional collaboration for health

16:30 – 17:00

Coffee break

17:00 – 18:30

Plenary session 2:

Outstanding issues for the preparation of the Second Health Ministers' Forum, Skopje, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 25-26 November 2005

Health and economic development in south-eastern Europe in the 21st century

- Presentations of four chapters by writers
- Presentation of executive summary by Mr Dimo Iliev, CEB
- Discussions

Closure