

Regional Committee for Europe

EUR/RC68/ML/2

68th session

Rome, Italy, 17–20 September 2018

10 September 2018

180621

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Ministerial lunch on innovations in health information systems

**Tuesday, 18 September 2018
12:30–14:30, upstairs balcony**

Background

1. At the World Health Assembly in 2007 WHO Member States passed a resolution on strengthening health information at the country level. In the resolution they called health information not merely a core element but the “foundation” of health systems, and thus the foundation of universal health coverage. Since then, WHO has increased its efforts to support countries in the strengthening of national health information systems and has observed innovative actions at the country level throughout the WHO European Region.
2. However, health information and evidence in the European Region remain somewhat fragmented, despite increasing investment and Member States’ commitment to strengthening health information systems. Fragmentation of health information and evidence is particularly problematic in that it leads to an underestimation of health inequalities, given that health information tends to be poorest where health is poorest. Finland has overcome this problem through innovation: it has created a fully integrated and interoperable information system for health, the first of its kind in Europe, and probably in the world, that integrates information from various sectors involved in health and well-being.
3. This innovation is needed, particularly in the era of Health 2020 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: health information reporting has become increasingly important and is placing high demands on Member States, which are required to report on numerous frameworks.
4. Digitalization is a key element in achieving this integration. Most Member States in the European Region have already embarked on digitalization – but not all.
5. The WHO Regional Office for Europe has therefore stepped up its support to countries with regard to health information and evidence through several activities, most visibly through the WHO European Health Information Initiative (EHII), which coordinates and guides health information activities in the European Region and which has the goal of interoperability and harmonization of information. EHII has 39 members, comprised mostly of Member States, but also international organizations such as the Organisation for Economic

Co-operation and Development, the European Commission and other partners, including global ones.

6. EHII has spearheaded the development of numerous new initiatives, including the European Health Information Gateway, support tools and mechanisms, capacity-building events and support to e-health activities, and has established eight health information networks that support Member States in harmonizing health information, enhancing interoperability and translating evidence into policy. It has also led the efforts to propose a joint monitoring framework to reduce the reporting burden on Member States.

7. Much progress has been made, but new challenges continue to arise, including the use of new technologies and big data for health. These will require WHO and Member States to further enhance their efforts to innovate in the area of health information systems.

Format and expected outcome of the session

8. The lunch on innovations in health information systems will be an interactive session that aims to make the case that innovative health information systems are at the forefront of efforts to secure universal health coverage and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. However, the key innovation – so far only observed in Finland – is full integration and interoperability of several information systems that serve well-being and health. Ministers will be taken through each element of the cycle from the production, analysis and reporting of information and evidence, to the use of evidence for policy-making with a view to encouraging them to innovate in all areas. The session will be composed of interactive and dynamic explanations of each element of the evidence-to-policy cycle, will feature the concrete experiences of Member States, and will showcase innovation, including through digital health and electronic means. The session will conclude with a challenge for Member States as well as international organizations, through a provocative statement by a well-known academic.

= = =