



Pan-European Commission on Health and Sustainable Development

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Rethinking Policy Priorities in the light of Pandemics

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Terms of Reference

Objectives

The Commission is requested to:

- 1) conduct a comprehensive reconsideration, in the light of the pandemic crisis, of priority-setting in economic and social policies. In addition to the tragic toll of human lives, COVID-19 has caused unprecedented economic losses, social disruptions and serious setbacks in terms of sustainable development goals. It is therefore imperative to draw lessons on how policy-making, in the broadest sense and at the highest political levels, nationally as well as internationally, should be enhanced – in terms of forecasting, and preventive and responsive capacities – in order to cope with phenomena like pandemics also in relation to climate change and the environment.
- 2) identify challenges and opportunities confronting health and social care systems in the WHO European Region. This will be based on reviewing the evidence, identifying critical uncertainties, and assessing constraints and enabling factors to upgrade the Region's health and social care systems in view of the challenges facing societies post-COVID-19. It will incorporate lessons from the way health systems and health authorities have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis and recommendations shall have sustainable development as their frame of reference.
- 3) make evidence-based recommendations and build consensus on: enhancing the awareness of potential pandemic-like threats at the stage of strategic priority-setting in economic, social and budgetary policies; redefining the most adequate governance, also in terms of the division of competences and responsibilities between national and international (in some cases, supranational) levels; upgrading health systems in terms of structure and investments; and building health systems' resilience and capacity to anticipate and innovate for elevating health and social care as a societal priority. The costs of failing to achieve the above should be assessed not only in their short- and medium-term economic and social dimensions, but also in terms of inadequate actions toward sustainable development.

Organization of the Commission's work

- Scope and frame the questions and issues relevant to the post-COVID-19 recovery and renewal of the Region's health systems.
- Commission the identification and review of relevant evidence via a set of knowledge networks consisting of researchers, practitioners and scientists from across the Region.
- Produce a flagship Commission report with an agenda of critical actions to increase the resilience of the Region's health systems and societies.

- Establish partnerships with countries and supranational agencies to spearhead policy discourse with and between health authorities, experts and citizen assemblies, aimed at increasing health system and societal resilience to major health and socioeconomic challenges.

Stages and content of work

The Commission's work will take place in two stages.

- In the first stage, the Commission will work closely with the WHO Regional Office for Europe and the Commission's Scientific Advisory Board to establish the evidence base and to identify the options for future health system investments and priorities.
- In the second stage, the Commission will evaluate the available evidence and the options identified in the first stage of its review. The Commission will then provide independent advice to WHO on its view of future priorities to improve health system resilience.

In addition, the Commission will:

- review and prioritize the challenges facing health systems over the next two to three decades, drawing on lessons from international experience beyond the European Region, where relevant;
- consider and prioritize the outcomes of long-term health systems' resilience policies that best respond to those challenges, improve health systems' resilience and performance, and promote equity of access to health services;
- consider the ways in which existing and planned initiatives help to address the challenges and target the outcomes identified;
- explore the strategic options for enhancing health systems' resilience across the Region; and
- consider approaches to policy-making capable of enhancing the awareness of potential pandemic-like threats at the stage of strategic priority-setting in economic, social and budgetary policies.

Duties of Members of the Commission

Members of the Commission will be required to participate in up to five virtual meetings over a period of 12 months. They will also be responsible for reviewing the progress of the Commission, based in particular on material and reports produced by the Scientific Advisory Board, and for offering feedback on such documents. Members will not be expected to participate in drafting the report, unless they wish to do so, but they will review the draft report and provide critical feedback to support its refinement and finalization.

Independence of the Commission

The report will be adopted by the Commission in its full independence. It will only engage the responsibility of the Commission and of its Members, in their personal capacity.

Timeline

The Commission will be announced and formally launched in August 2020. It is expected to complete its work by September 2021.