

Basel, 6 September 2019/TS

Agenda item 5(a) Increasing equity in health and leaving no one behind in the WHO European Region

This statement by MMI is supported by People's Health Movement.

We appreciate the Regional Committee keeping health equity, a core issue of global health, high on its agenda.

The Ljubljana Statement on Health Equity explicitly acknowledges the role austerity measures play in widening inequities. We would like to see this reflected more in the draft resolution.

However, the focus here is mainly on “generating cutting-edge evidence and methods”. We have had a lot of evidence for a while now; what we are missing is more action. Member States should act on the evidence, now reinforced through the European Health Equity Status Report, and steer away from neoliberal policies, which enhance inequities in health.

We call upon the Regional Committee to support and lead Member States in this by returning to the vision of the Declaration of Alma Ata, where resources are fairly redistributed within and between countries.

Health equity can only be achieved through dedication to the original idea of Health for All. This includes health systems tailored on needs, rather than halfway solutions for reducing public expenditure in other sectors through selective investment in healthcare.

It is commendable that the resolution offers practical guidance for a “health-in-all-policies” approach. If tailored to protect health against economic interests, this could indeed help alleviate health inequities in the region.

However, a true commitment to health equity should mean that the health of those already left behind, including refugees and migrants, is a clear priority. We therefore urge Member States to take a bolder stand in their future action on health equity, ensuring that they are led by the commitment to realising a just world.

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