

Technical briefing on the upcoming WHO European Health Equity Status Report Initiative

**Thursday, 20 September 2018
12:30–14:20, Sala Andrea Pininfarina**

Background

1. Over the last two decades, there have been significant technical and political efforts made to improve health equity in the WHO European Region. At the same time, there have been several political, economic and social shifts that have had a negative impact on health in the Region and adversely affected the conditions needed to achieve health equity. Therefore, progress towards narrowing gaps in health equity in the Region has been uneven, and, in some cases, the situation has become worse. For example, in 50% of WHO Member States in the Region, with respect to reducing illness, the gap between the richest and the poorest in society either did not change or increased between 2008 and 2015, for both men and women.

2. The WHO European Health Equity Status Report Initiative (HESRi) is a suite of tools that is being developed to promote and support policy action for health equity and well-being in the Region. It will be launched in early 2019 and will enable regional Member States, WHO and its partners to accelerate progress towards closing health gaps within countries. This is in line with Health 2020, the European policy for health and well-being, and the European roadmap to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, building on Health 2020, in the context of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. The HESRi will provide analysis of health equity status, trends, policies and evidence, and provide policy guidance, communication tools and economic arguments to support action to:

- strengthen the equity impact of health sector policies and services;
- improve the design and implementation of cross-sectoral policies so that they deliver better results for health equity;
- improve governance in order to tackle the roots of exclusion, stigma and discrimination;
- build alliances and advocate for better investments and accountability for health equity in local, national and regional decision-making forums.

4. The HESRi will thus set a baseline to allow Member States in the Region to monitor their own health equity status and policy progress. It will also provide information on scaling up and enabling action on health equity, even in data-poor Member States, by identifying:

- what works, as well as where stubborn gaps in health equity remain;
- the mix of policies and interventions that can be implemented to accelerate the closing of health gaps;
- which sectors and partners are priorities for policy collaboration to increase equity in health.

5. The theme of the first HESRi report will be health, well-being and prosperity for all. The report will analyse progress, priorities and opportunities for action to create an inclusive, prosperous and sustainable society through reducing inequities in health in the Region.

6. In addition, the following interactive, on-line tools that can be adapted for use in each country, even in countries that are data-poor, will be launched with the HESRi:

- an interactive health equity atlas, which will be hosted on the European Health Information Gateway and will include indicators of mortality, morbidity, well-being, self-reported health and the conditions needed to be able to live a healthy life;
- policy guidance for reducing inequities in health during the life-course, with the guidance tailored to individual Member States on the basis of data from the health equity atlas;
- tools to support improved governance, investment and accountability for health equity, including communication and advocacy tools.

Objectives of the briefing

7. The objectives of the briefing are as follows:

- to outline how tackling health inequities is key to improving health;
- to provide information on the HESRi and the suite of tools that will be launched with it in early 2019;
- to demonstrate how the HESRi will be an authoritative instrument for supporting Member States, WHO and its partners in taking action for greater health equity across the Region.

Format of the briefing

8. The briefing will start with a presentation on the current trends and status of health equity within Member States of the Region and on progress to implement policies for health equity across the Region. The presentation will be followed by a moderated panel discussion involving national and subnational policy-makers who will share their experiences and responses to the following questions:

- How are Member States overcoming disinvestments in policies that impact directly and indirectly on health equity?

- What approaches are being taken to improve the effectiveness and accountability of intersectoral policies so that they deliver the living and working conditions that are essential for living a healthy life, across all socioeconomic strata?
- What approaches can Member States take to make health equity central to the implementation and success of local, regional and national development plans?
- What are some of the experiences that Member States have had when attempting to implement a life-course approach to reducing health inequities in current and future generations?
- How can Member States help foster a strong voice for political advocacy for health equity, both locally and nationally?

9. The panel discussion will then be opened to the floor for questions. The briefing will conclude with a summary of the steps that will be taken ahead of the launch of the HESRi, including an overview of the main products and tools that will be provided to support Member States, WHO and its partners to strengthen action for health equity within countries.

Expected outcomes

10. The expected outcomes of this session are as follows:
- participants will have an increased awareness of key trends and the current status of health equity within Member States;
 - participants will have been updated on the upcoming HESRi and its accompanying suite of tools to support decision-makers in improving policies and approaches for health equity;
 - there will have been a structured discussion on how to overcome challenges, improve effectiveness and sustain commitment to making health equity central to all governmental decisions and investments.

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