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Europe



Strategic mapping of institutional frameworks and their approach to equity



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Mapping exercise conducted to inform the implementation of the Health Equity Status
Report initiative (HESRI) of the WHO Regional Office for Europe

Abstract

International organizations within the health sector, as well as in other policy areas that are of relevance to the distribution of health inequities in society, pursue different approaches towards equity and equality. For example, equity may be expressed with regards to access to services, resources and opportunities; to levels of exposure and vulnerability to risk; or as a social value in itself, and a root factor contributing to other societal benefits. This report analyses a series of selected policy frameworks that guide the work of key institutions from within and outside of the health sector, including United Nations agencies, international and regional organizations, and national governments. The analysis elucidates the position of these stakeholders with regards to equity objectives, as expressed in their institutional frameworks. In doing so, the report aims to provide an insight into the institutional policy context of health equity in the WHO European Region, highlighting factors that may potentially enable, support or hinder the establishment of collaborations among selected institutional partners for the implementation of the Health Equity Status Report initiative of the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

Keywords:

HEALTH EQUITY
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Abbreviations

CES	Conference of European Statisticians
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EU	European Union
GPW	General Programme of Work
HESR	Health Equity Status Report
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LMICs	low- and middle-income countries
NCDs	noncommunicable diseases
NGO	nongovernmental organization
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
THE PEP	Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WBG	World Bank Group

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Chris Brown, Head of the WHO Venice Office, is responsible for the strategic development and coordination of the HESRi. Development of the initial framework was guided by the external Scientific Expert Advisory Group to the WHO European HESRi.

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Executive summary

In 2012, the endorsement by Member States of the European health policy framework, Health 2020, set two strategic priorities that would lead the work of the WHO Regional Office for Europe in the years to come: the reduction of health inequities and the improvement of governance for health. Political commitment to reducing inequalities was also placed at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015.

Guided by these normative frameworks and as part of its efforts to promote action on health equity across the WHO European Region, the WHO Regional Office for Europe launched in 2018 the Health Equity Status Report (HESR) initiative. Its objectives are twofold: to improve the evidence available by establishing a baseline for monitoring health equity outcomes within countries and areas; and to set up an agenda to scale up action on health equity across the Region within countries and areas.

This strategic mapping exercise contributes to the second objective of the HESR initiative. Its overarching aim is to provide insight into the institutional policy context for health equity in the WHO European Region, highlighting factors that may potentially enable, support or hinder the establishment of collaborations among institutional partners for the implementation of the HESR initiative. In order to do so, a rapid analysis has been conducted of strategic and policy frameworks that guide the work of key institutions from within and outside of the health sector, which are deemed relevant for the reduction of health inequities in the European Region. These include a total of 15 frameworks from United Nations agencies, international and regional organizations, and national governments.

The mapping uses normative documents as the subject of analysis, acknowledging their relevance as instruments for accountability. The selected institutional frameworks include commitments to which signatories – countries and/or intergovernmental organizations – have agreed. Understanding the implications of such commitments for health equity, as well as the potential synergies and divergencies among them, is essential to inform institutional partnerships that work towards the achievement of health equity as a shared objective.

For these reasons, this mapping seeks to elucidate the position of the selected stakeholders with regards to equity objectives, as expressed in their written frameworks. Stakeholders are grouped according to their approach towards equity and equality, as well as the policy areas in which

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