



European Health Forum Gastein

Creating a better Future for Health in Europe

Integrating Health across Policies

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Gastein Health Declaration 2001

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GASTEIN HEALTH DECLARATION 2001:

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT ON INTEGRATING HEALTH ACROSS POLICIES AND SECTORS.

The European Health Forum Gastein.

The European Health Forum at Gastein is a unique annual event, which brings together experts, interest groups and politicians from across wider Europe to debate topical health issues. The main stakeholders that form the pillars of Gastein are politicians, the health sector, civil society represented by NGO's, academics and the private sector. A significant outcome of these events is a statement of observations, conclusions and recommendations emanating from the discussion from the EHFG president to those with Governance responsibilities in Health Policy Development and Implementation. This statement is disseminated to key institutions such as those of the EU and member states and regions to maximise impact. Subsequently, these recommendations are supported by the publication of a full report of the scientific presentations.

The organising theme this year was "Integrating Health across Policies". Six parallel Fora were organised around the theme. Practical experiences at the national and regional levels, the Common Agricultural Policy, international trade and globalisation, and the Single European Market and information developments were all included. The Fora provided the participants with an opportunity to learn about the policy issues, practical developments, and to become more familiar with innovations. It enabled politicians and other stakeholders to review the evidence and seek perspectives across a broad range of sectors on recommendations of their interest.

The main observations of the six parallel Forum for this year are grouped below. Our hope is that you find them timely and useful in application to your responsibilities for health development.

Each Forum considered the implications for health and health systems and services at the individual level as well as at the local, regional, national and supra- national levels. The EHFG includes the 51 countries within the WHO European area i.e. the EU and accession countries, Central and Eastern Europe and the EEA countries. Every effort is made to ensure that all of the different interests and perspectives are covered.

Günther Leiner,

President,
European Health Forum Gastein

- The EHFG declaration does not necessarily reflect the views of all participants.
- A publication of all scientific papers can be ordered from the International Forum Gastein. Abstracts and Presentations are available at www.ehfg.org

1.) General EHFG observations and recommendations

Integrating health across policies is an issue that has now moved centre stage. Citizens and the public at large will judge politicians and organisations by their ability to place health at the Centre of other policies.

a.) Principles for promoting health across policies and sectors

The EHFG elaborated the following principles for promoting health across other policies and sectors:

- Health should be the driving force shaping economic and social development and be considered as a public good and societal investment.
- Health is an ideal vehicle for building good governance, effective organisations and social cohesion.
- Health policy should be transformed from a reactive into a proactive force for shaping society.
- The promotion and protection of health should be routinely considered in all policy areas and sectors.
- Health policy should always consider the wider determinants of health and public health should routinely be considered when reforming and developing health systems and services. Health policy should consider the right mix of “upstream” and “downstream” solutions
- Health should be regarded as a core component at the heart of sustainable development and economic policy.
- “Joined up working” across sectors, settings, disciplines policies and programmes for health should become standard practice.
- Actions to promote the public health should be genuinely consultative and transparent.
- Governance and accountability for health and its determinants should be clearly and publicly defined.
- Health policies should consider the global dimension and be characterised by a sense of social responsibility.
- Organisations should ensure that policies and programmes narrow and do not widen health inequalities.

b.) Other general EHFG observations and recommendations

- A special international expert committee (similar to the WHO Commission on Macroeconomics and Health) should be established to comprehensively review the links between health, economics and sustainable development policy for Europe, European countries and citizens.
- Academic (Health) economists should be encouraged to undertake more studies on macro-economic issues.
- The precautionary principle for protecting and promoting health should be applied across all policy areas and sectors.
- Health impact assessments should become standard practice for all relevant policy developments and programmes.

- The EU and national governments should ensure that sustainable development incorporates health as a fundamental component in all such considerations.
- Policies in the public and private sectors should be independently audited for their impact on health and development.
- New forms of promoting health literacy for the public should be piloted and developed that include the determinants of health as well as the beneficial use of health services.

2.) Specific Forum observations and recommendations

Forum I: Health in other Policies and Sectors

- Health policy should be developed according to the principles and mechanisms set out in the WHO's Ottawa charter for health promotion (1986), (i.e. it should include the 5 key dimensions of building healthy public policy, strengthening communities, reorientating health services, promoting healthy lifestyles and creating supportive environments.)
- The WHO Ottawa health charter (1986) should be updated in relation to a. the health impact of globalisation and b) the reduction of poverty and other determinants of health inequalities.

Forum II: Globalisation, World Trade and Health

- There is a need for greater plurality and balance between nation states, corporations and civil society in the development process for international trade agreements.
- Health and human development goals should be central to the development of international trade agreements.
- The principles of transparency and accountability are essential components of international trade.
- Urgent funding is required for research into the interaction between trade and health and on the health impact of international trade agreements.
- Urgent measures are required to develop a critical mass of researchers on international trade and health and globalisation at national and international levels.
- There is an urgent need to develop and accelerate training for policy experts and influencers, both within and outside health and across sectors in trade/health interactions.

Forum III: Health and the Single European Market

- There is a need for the EU to monitor the impact of the SEM in respect of:
 - The labour market and movement of doctors and nurses.
 - Patient movement across national borders.
 - The impact of the SEM on candidate countries, especially in relation to financial differences, loss of trained professionals and patient influx as a consequence of areas of expertise and lower costs.
- Making "Citizens Europe" a reality for health the major pillar of the new EU health strategy.
- Article 152 of the Amsterdam Treaty should be revised to allow SEM issues to be considered in a health context.

- The Directorate General for Health and Consumer Protection needs to take leadership of SEM discussions and other crosscutting health issues such as trade and competition policy and advising on universal minimum standards for health services.
- There should be more SEM policy – relevant research within the 6th research framework programme.

Forum IV: Building a healthy Common Agricultural Policy

- It should be universally affirmed that a “multifunctional” agriculture should incorporate health objectives.
- The European Commission should publish its Action plan on Nutrition Policy by the spring of 2002.
- An inter-service working group should be established on the Common Agricultural (and food) Policies which should consider farming and food policy and health.
- The Common Agricultural Policy should promote the consumption of fruit and vegetables.

Forum V: The Informed Patient/Citizen: a new partner in the political health arena

The development of new technologies and information systems in the past two decades has led to an increase in patient power and participation in decision making and increased informed choice and consent.

- Health care systems should be reoriented away from the needs of institutions, procedures and technology towards being centred around the relationship with the patient and citizens they are there to serve.
- The crisis in healthcare could be remedied to some extent by patient participation in evidence based decision- making.
- Regional, national and international institutions, governments, NGO’s and private corporations working in healthcare should consider their involvement in:
 - Supporting research to increase the body of knowledge about civic participation in health and healthcare.
 - Developing supportive mechanisms to increase the availability of balanced, accurate and comprehensive health information to patients and citizens.
 - Introducing mechanisms to support a change in the traditional frame of reference of perception about the roles of professionals and patients in the healthcare system.
 - Analysing the consistency of the practice of institutions as compared to their declared missions.
 - Making available information and case studies about good practice in healthcare services and involve citizens in prioritisation and clinical decision-making.
 - Analysing, reporting and acting in case of overuse, misuse and under-use of healthcare services and involving citizens in prioritisation and clinical decision-making.
 - Providing citizens with supportive information to help them choose the most appropriate doctors, services and insurers.
- There is a need to increase citizens/patients literacy about evidence-based decision-making and develop mechanisms and incentives to increase the public disclosure of information.
- The mechanisms of the EU – European Health Forum should be designed so that they ensure the development of citizens/patients centred health policy.

Forum VI: Health in the Information Age: Health Technology and Policy Development.

- eHealth should be defined as the usage of new information and communication technologies and innovative ideas on the organisation of health services to benefit all actors.
- eHealth should develop a pan European strategy that includes a content quality management process and an architecture/platform to integrate existing or new systems.
- The use of eHealth in the healthcare system can improve efficiency; quality and patient orientated services. But a number of side effects have to be considered.
- Information and communication technologies do not change the healthcare system, but can be used to facilitate changes in the system.
- Successful eHealth needs regulatory, organisational and technological improvement.
- eHealth applications enable (international) co-operation between actors. For reasons of interoperability - standardisation is a very important task. Standardisation has to be undertaken for terminology, data definitions, content, data format and structure. International standards should be followed, and European and national diversity recognised.
 - The process of standardisation should be given more attention and speeded up. Furthermore rules and agreements on a legal or contractual basis are needed when looking at cross-border solutions or looking at usage of healthcare services in foreign countries. [as information and communication technologies (with the Internet as a backbone) enable such solutions].
- The EC should speed up eHealth standardisation and harmonisation work on an international level in co-operation of the European nations and promote the results.
- The EC should co-ordinate national eHealth initiatives to ensure interoperability within Europe.