

# Supporting Universal Health Care

## Sustainable UHC through Stronger Health Systems

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# Why Universal Health Care Coverage?

- Health Care as a public good
  - Not delivered in sufficient quantities if decisions left to unregulated market forces
  - Information asymmetries – risk of adverse selection
- Universal Health Care as the most cost-efficient prevention mechanism
  - Universal coverage improves health outcomes for society as a whole (rich and poor alike)
- Universal Health Care as optimal fiscal solution
  - Universal coverage, if properly designed, is the best mechanism for cost containment
  - Allows redistribution, but not only between rich and poor
- Should have universal appeal in every political and cultural context

# UHC and international cooperation – institutional constraints

- Health care systems and arrangements are probably the most guarded national prerogatives even in today's globalized world
- Demand side (patients, i.e., voters)
  - most of health care is consumed by older and less mobile cohorts of population
  - expectations to be treated by someone whom we inherently trust (culture, language)
  - [albeit even close cultural proximity and similar languages have not resulted in massive patient movements between, e.g. Nordic countries]
- Supply side (payer/provider, i.e., political domain)
  - demand side constraints result in strictly national financial arrangements
  - both insurance-based and budgetary (tax-base) health care is financed by sizable transfers between generations and between those who need care and those who are healthy (national fiscal policy)
  - rates of return of institutional changes and physical investments in health care depend on lengthy maturity times (public investment)

# How international and European cooperation can assist policies towards UHC?

- Established global frameworks – UN/WHO, OECD
- European Union: while responsibility for national health care policies remains firmly with Member States ...
- EU common policies support universal health care
  - Mostly implemented by IG cooperation (exchange of information, open coordination) and Commission-supported, project-based cooperation between public and private sector and in expert groups
  - An overarching European Commission's Third Health Programme (2014-2020)
  - Fostering good health (e.g. strategy on nutrition and obesity-related health issues, incl. HLG and Action plan on child obesity, EU platform for action on diet, physical activity)
  - Health security (preparedness, risk assessment and management on IG level, incl. Health Security Committee)
  - Health inequality (Commission communication on solidarity, European partnership on active and healthy ageing)
  - Dissemination of health statistics

# How international and European cooperation can assist policies towards UHC (cont'd)?

- EU common policies with direct relevance to universal health care:
  - Health Programme 2014-2020
  - Innovative, efficient and sustainable health systems
    - Cooperation in HTA – Health Technology Assessment Network and Joint Action on HTA (Eunet HTA) (e.g., methodology, possibility to (re)use results of MS' HTAs)
    - Exchange of information and dissemination of good practices in health systems' reform
    - EU legislation on medical devices
  - Access to better and safer health care
    - System of European reference networks for rare diseases - European/global competence centers for rare diseases provide more efficient treatment (both in treatment quality and economically)
    - Health Systems Performance Assessment – developing indicators for evaluating quality of health care in MS
    - eHealth and digital Single Market – providing platform for information exchange on different MS' e-health services
- EU common licensing of medicines for EU market



# How international and European cooperation can assist policies towards UHC (cont'd)?

- EU other common policies with direct relevance to universal health care:
  - EU Cohesion Policy – reduce economic and social disparities in the Union
    - European Regional Development Fund – health infrastructure (e.g., in Estonia investments in specialist health care competence centers and primary care centers)
    - European Social Fund – funding of prevention and health activities
  - As part of economic and fiscal policy coordination, EU issues country-specific recommendations that can also address health care policy issues (e.g., to ensure fiscal sustainability of health system in a particular member state)

# How multilateral and bilateral cooperation can assist policies towards UHC – Estonian experience

- AIM (Association Internationale de la Mutualité)
  - Different working groups for covering similar issues in all Member States
  - Health promotion & disease prevention – health care campaigns etc for increasing awareness of health issues and exchanging experience about how to reform populations' behavior
  - Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices – managing medical devices' and pharmaceuticals' price agreements and terms of distribution
  - European Affairs – lobbying and discussion of key issues that currently actual in health care sector
  - Study trips to Member States in order to better understand different health insurance systems and to learn and possibly give advice on overcoming their shortcomings
- Cooperation with FI, LV, LT
- Cooperation with Moldovan National Health Insurance Company
  - 2 development cooperation projects since 2011 funded by Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
  - The aim of the projects is to support the functioning of Moldovan health insurance system through sharing Estonian experience



# How European cooperation broadens access to care in Estonia?

- Treatment abroad – EU framework (regulation and directive):
  - Necessary health care under European Health Insurance Card – medical costs in case of accident are covered
  - Planned specialist care abroad if care can not be provided in Estonia
  - Planned specialist care abroad for which referral from the doctor is required - EHIF covers the costs of the services which belong to Estonian Health Service List and are also covered for patients in Estonia
- Treatment abroad – Estonian national framework:
  - Health Insurance Act states the criteria for planned treatment abroad for which prior authorization from EHIF is required (EHIF covers the costs of all medical services)
- Treatment abroad – Estonian experience
  - The costs for cross-border treatment form **less than 1%** of EHIF's annual budget



**Thank you for your attention!**

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