



World Health
Organization

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR
Europe

Coverage, access and financial protection in Europe: a regional overview

Evidence for Universal
Health Coverage

WHO Barcelona Office for Health Systems Strengthening

The WHO Barcelona Office is a centre of excellence in health financing for universal health coverage (UHC). We work with Member States across WHO's European Region to promote evidence-informed policy making.

A key part of our work is to assess country and regional progress towards UHC by monitoring financial protection – the impact of out-of-pocket payments for health on living standards and poverty. Financial protection is a core dimension of health system performance and an indicator for the Sustainable Development Goals.

We support countries to develop policy, monitor progress and design reforms through a combination of health system problem diagnosis, analysis of country-specific policy options, high-level policy dialogue and the sharing of international experience. Our office is also the home for WHO training courses on health financing and health systems strengthening for better health outcomes.

The WHO Barcelona Office is part of the Division of Health Systems and Public Health of the Regional Office for Europe. Established in 1999, it is supported by the Government of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia, Spain.



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About the project

The WHO Regional Office for Europe initiated a multi-year project in 2015 to strengthen the monitoring of financial protection and generate new evidence on progress towards universal health coverage (UHC).

Working through the WHO Barcelona Office for Health Systems Strengthening, part of the Division of Health Systems and Public Health, the Regional Office has developed an approach to monitoring financial protection that aims to:

- be relevant to all Member States in the region
- generate actionable evidence for policy
- promote pro-poor policies to break the link between poverty and ill health

WHO's support for monitoring financial protection in Europe is underpinned by the [Tallinn Charter, Health 2020](#) and resolution [EUR/RC65/R5](#) on priorities for health systems strengthening in the WHO European Region 2015–2020, all of which include a commitment to work towards a Europe free of impoverishing payments for health. The resolution calls on WHO to provide member states with tools and support for monitoring financial protection and for policy analysis, development, implementation and evaluation.

In response, the project has established three streams of work:

- developing policy-relevant metrics for this domain of health system performance
- producing country-level analysis for national policy development
- drawing lessons for policy through regional analysis

Which countries does the project cover?

In its first phase the project covers 25 countries: Albania, Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. The project will be extended to other countries in the WHO European Region in a second phase.

Policy-relevant metrics for health system performance assessment

Financial protection is central to UHC and a core dimension of health system performance assessment. Building on commonly used indicators, the project has developed an approach to measuring and monitoring financial protection that is suited to the policy needs of high- and middle-income countries. Our approach has been through several rounds of consultation with national and international experts, including colleagues across WHO and in the World Bank. For details of the approach, please see the original research article in [Public Health Panorama](#).

Country-level analysis for national policy development

National experts in 25 countries are working in collaboration with WHO to produce country-based reviews of financial protection. [Country reviews](#) aim to support national policy development through detailed, context-specific analysis and carefully tailored policy recommendations. They will be available online from December 2017.

Lessons for policy through regional analysis

Country reviews will feed into a regional report to be published in 2018. The regional report will review issues around health coverage and access to health care; discuss trends in out-of-pocket payments for health; assess the state of financial protection in Europe; highlight good practice; and identify policy responses. We will share preliminary findings from the regional analysis at a conference to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Tallinn Charter in Estonia on 13 and 14 June 2018.

Further information

For more information about the project, please contact [Sarah Thomson](#).

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