Health systems respond to NCDs: 
the European experience 
Sitges, Spain 
16–18 April 2018

Scope and purpose

Background

A comprehensive and coherent health systems response is critical to reducing premature mortality from noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). Strengthening health systems for more effective prevention and treatment of NCDs is central to implementation of Health 2020, the European policy framework for health and well-being, underpins the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, and is closely linked to the achievement of universal health coverage. However, pragmatic and actionable guidance on what constitutes a comprehensive and coherent health systems response to NCDs is not readily available. Over the past five years, the WHO Regional Office for Europe has worked with Member States of the WHO European Region and a network of experts to provide:

• multidisciplinary country support with assessments as entry points in over a dozen countries;
• a series of good practices to highlight effective instruments for health system transformation;
• capacity-building in the form of an annual training programme reaching more than 300 people; and
• various platforms for regional exchange and experience sharing.

Synthesizing and going beyond this country work, the Regional Office for Europe, together with a number of Member States and a network of experts, has developed an evidence-informed vision for a comprehensive and coherent health systems response to NCDs. This vision is set out in a regional report, which will be launched at the high-level meeting.

Objectives and key themes

The meeting and its plenary sessions will:

• present and discuss the health systems vision to respond to NCDs and reflect on its coherence and comprehensiveness;
• highlight the equity and gender dimensions of health system transformation for better NCD outcomes, including for those left behind by traditional mainstream approaches;
• explore the possibility of leapfrogging and implementing an accelerated vision of health system transformation for a faster reduction of premature mortality from NCDs; and
• ascertain factors that enable implementing successful large-scale health system transformation.

The technical sessions will facilitate discussion and experience sharing on a number of technical topics, including:
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- results and outcome orientation with performance monitoring and feedback through the health system;
- governance needs for sustained intersectoral action for NCDs;
- transforming public health agencies to lead health promotion for and prevention of NCDs;
- the role of local governments and communities in NCD prevention, detection and management;
- implementing multi-profile, team-based integrated primary care to step up early detection and disease management;
- implementing a people-centred approach for NCDs;
- health financing strategies to support health system transformation for a more effective NCD response;
- a fit-for-purpose health workforce for NCD prevention, detection and management;
- access to quality medicines and technologies at the right place and the right time; and
- bridging policy gaps with information solutions.

Expected outcome

The vision and conclusions of the meeting, in the form of an outcome document, will contribute to reporting to the third United Nations high-level meeting on NCDs, to be held in 2018, and will be submitted to the Regional Committee for Europe for consideration at its 68th session in September 2018.

Target audience

The meeting is intended to be a forum for high-level representatives of the 53 Member States in the European Region, relevant international organizations and selected nongovernmental organizations. Participants will represent a cross-section of health systems and diverse backgrounds to enable cross-discipline dialogue. Expected participants include:

- ministers of health, social protection, finance and development;
- directors of funding/purchasing agencies;
- senior policy-makers and officials in ministries of health, finance or social protection, other ministries and government departments responsible for overall health system and/or NCD policy;
- senior officials and/or experts of public health agencies with responsibilities for health promotion and prevention related to NCDs;
- senior officials and/or experts in charge of policies, legislation or relations with service delivery organizations, including primary care and specialized care for NCDs;
- senior officials and/or experts in funding and purchasing agencies working towards better contracts and incentives to step up early detection and disease prevention;
- representatives of national and local governments involved in intersectoral action; and
- nongovernmental organizations, including those representing patients.