



**Statement on the Reports on the WHO high-level meetings on Health Systems in Sitges (*Item 5.e*)
and Tallinn (*Item 5.j*)
at the 68th session of WHO Regional Committee for Europe**

Rome, September 2018

EuroHealthNet, the European Partnership for improving health equity and wellbeing, which consists of National Public Health Institutes and Regional Health Authorities, congratulates WHO on the progress made at the Sitges and Tallinn high level meetings. We appreciate both outcome statements, encouraging Member States to take action to achieve comprehensive health systems that are people-centred and affordable for all. We are pleased to contribute with some suggestions for continued development.

Non-communicable disease epidemics are growing and are strongly related to the persistent health inequalities in Europe. Tackling NCDs requires urgent and joint action where health systems have a pivotal role.

What we however do miss in the outcome documents are the preventative and health promoting dimensions. Most of the factors associated with NCDs are largely preventable, and require a stronger health promotion and disease prevention response. Health systems should take systematic and strategic action on risk factors. They must engage in tackling broader societal determinants, in particular with regard to the social gradient of inequalities, using existing knowledge and experience. The important future work on transforming health systems needs to strengthen and further developing this core dimension of health system performance.

Most of the health system concept is still understood as health care. Even if the Sitges and Tallinn statements make due reference to cross-sectoral action as part of the Sustainable Development Agenda and refer to the importance of health equity, they fail to provide proposals for bold and effective solutions. As the WHO wants to transform health systems and not leave anyone behind, we suggest **developing a much more explicit and meaningful approach to integrating health promotion and social determinants- approaches throughout the system, with an increased role in primary care services**. Social innovation is as key as technological innovation. We need truly health promoting systems, not a single health promotion compartment, within a public health silo of a disease centred system.

The EuroHealthNet Partnership is keen to work with the WHO and discuss how this radical paradigm shift can be shaped inside and outside the health system, so that we truly meet the health equity challenges of this century.