

The Societies at a Crossroads - rights-based approach to health equity

Vertti Kiukas, Secretary General

EuroHealthNet Annual Seminar 31 May 2022

SOSTE

The societies are at a crossroads

The climate change is challenging our societies and our thinking. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the current and future well-being and increased inequality.

In a world after the pandemic and the Russian attack against Ukraine, we are forced to rethink the system and economy we have built to ensure equal possibilities and capabilities for all.

Health inequalities - a major challenge

- Health inequalities still represent a major challenge for policy makers
- The COVID-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine has further exacerbated already existing inequalities between and within countries and created new ones with long term consequences which are still difficult to foresee.
- This situation also offers the opportunity to take serious actions to put equity at the core of the recovery process and reform our systems.
- We have learned that a global and cross-sectoral governance as well as policy mechanisms should be implemented to address health inequalities and develop effective measures to remove those factors that favour structural inequalities such as differences in exposure to health risk factors and in access to health care.

Human rights perspective

- It's important to raise awareness on the importance of human rights protection during public health and other crises and find ways how to support member states in getting better resilience and preparedness to such crises.
- The states need to safeguard people's mental and physical well-being in many different circumstances. This includes making sure that people can access the healthcare they need.

Council of Europe - How to support Member States

- The Council of Europe has instruments to support and strengthen member States' capacities **to comply with human rights standards in the context of public health crises** for instance the European Convention on Human Rights, European Social Charter and the Convention on Human Rights.



In uncertain times we should highlight

- Securing conditions for health equity and wellbeing for all but especially vulnerable groups: people in situation of poverty for instance migrants and refugees. Strategies must be developed to ensure appropriate support for them, which should include the removal of any barriers in accessing healthcare services.
- Prioritize public investments for health
- Exploring new opportunities for instance through concepts like the Economy of Wellbeing and using the European Pillar of Social Rights more efficiently.

SOSTE



Horizontal policy domain

Wellbeing Economy

1. Well-being In All Policies
2. Equality and basic rights
3. Participation and vital civil society

SOSTE





The European pillar of social rights

SOSTE

Following the implementation of the pillar of social rights:

- Relevant principles for health equity (among others):
 - 3. Equal opportunities
 - 10. Healthy, safe and well-adapted work environment and data protection
 - 16. Health care
 - 18. Long-term care
 - 20. Access to essential services
- The relevant commission action (related to each principle):
 - Principle 10. Healthy, safe and well-adapted work environment and data protection
 - Related commission action: [EU strategic framework on health and safety at work 2021-2027](#)

The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan

- **The Commission will:**
- Propose an **initiative on Long-Term Care** in 2022 to set a framework for policy reforms to guide the development of sustainable long-term care that ensures better access to quality services for those in need.
 - Initiative: “Access to affordable and high-quality long-term care” – Commission adoption planned for third quarter 2022
- Propose new tools to better **measure barriers and gaps in access to healthcare** (2021- 2022). (IMPROVING ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE THROUGH MORE POWERFUL MEASUREMENT TOOLS, published 2021)
- Propose in Q4 2021 the **European Health Data Space** to promote access to health data for better healthcare, research and policy-making, and to foster the development, deployment and application of digital services for the provision of healthcare.

Key commission actions:

2022

- Implementation Report of the Working Time Directive
- Revision of the Barcelona targets
- Initiative on Pathways to School Success
- Review of the Quality Framework for Traineeships
- Initiative on Long-Term Care**
- Initiative on Collective Bargaining for the Self-employed
- Report of new High-Level Expert Group on Access to Adequate and Sustainable Social Protection
- New Tools and Indicators on Access to Healthcare**
- Legal proposals to reduce workers' exposure to hazardous chemicals, including asbestos**
- Council Recommendation on Minimum Income
- Initiative on Social Dialogue
- Guidance on Ex-Ante Distributional Impact Assessments
- First EU Report on Access to Essential Services

2023

First EU Report on Access to Essential Services

European Social Security Pass (ESSPASS)

2024

First evaluation of the European Labour Authority

2025

Review of the Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights

National level

- The national targets have been defined
 - → Following the developments/actions regarding the national targets
 - SOSTE was also active prior to the setting of national targets of the pillar
 - some of SOSTE's suggestions were included
- Timing of the advocacy work/lobbying
 - Anticipation and preparation → the time frame for lobbying often short

Implementing the pillar through European Semester

- Every year in May, the Commission publishes the spring package, its Country-Specific Recommendations (CSR)
- CSR include an analysis of the country reports and three summed up policy recommendations
- During the past decade, the Commission and the European Council have recommended to Finland e.g.
 - maintaining the stability or strengthening and adjusting public finances
 - implementing the reform of the municipals and healthcare and social services
 - taking measures that prolong the working careers of the young and the elderly
 - promoting the employment of the long-term unemployed and immigrants
 - increased monitoring of the indebtedness of households.

Thank you!

vertti.kiukas@soste.fi

SOSTE