

Tackling political and commercial determinants of health through policy and governance

The impact of politics and profits on health equity, and what to do about it.

13 November 2025, 14:00-15:00, Finlandia Hall, Helsinki

Abstract

Over the past two decades, public health has rightly focused on social, environmental, healthcare, and behavioural determinants of health. However, these determinants are shaped by political decisions and the structures of the institutions where those decisions are made.

To understand what drives health outcomes, we must examine how wealth and power shape political agendas, how corporate political practices influence policy, and how both elected representatives and the political systems they operate in are often aligned with commercial priorities. Voting patterns, lobbying practices, corruption, and revolving doors between industry and government all contribute to shaping policy environments in ways that can support or undermine public health.

The role of technology and social media further complicates this landscape, as both are increasingly leveraged by powerful actors to shape public opinion and policy debates. At the same time, political systems often lack transparency in their dealings with private interests, limiting public accountability. These dynamics create feedback loops where political decisions protect commercial interests, and commercial practices reinforce political inertia or resistance.

In this session, we will explore these interconnected determinants of health and their effects on health equity. We will then discuss strategies to counter these forces and promote a healthier, more equitable society.



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