



## **Statement for Consultation on *The Oslo Medicines Initiative 2021***

EuroHealthNet is a leading partnership bringing together agencies and authorities with responsibilities for public health, health promotion and tackling health inequalities at national and regional levels across Europe. These bodies are at the frontlines of preventing diseases and tackling public health consequences for people who struggle to access effective, high quality and affordable new medicines and medical products.

EuroHealthNet welcomes the *Oslo Medicines Initiative* and its aims to help to remedy the lack or inadequacy of effective “social contracts” and regulations establishing and ensuring clear rights and duties of all involved in medicines development processes. This is needed to ensure critical and innovative products are equitably available for people in need, and to apply lessons of the COVID-19 syndemic, particularly on effective cooperation between stakeholders at all levels of governance and supply.

### **What does EuroHealthNet see as the main issues affecting access to effective medicines?**

The importance of WHA Resolution 72.8 has been underlined by recent disclosures of significant variations between prices for innovative vaccines and therapies in Europe, thus reinforcing the importance of the transparency imperative in the Oslo Initiative. EuroHealthNet firmly reiterates the need for equitable public health priorities to be placed at the forefront of research and development for public good and recognises the work of other major European organisations, including the European Public Health Alliance, the European Patients Forum and organisations representing health system professionals.

We again emphasise the importance of intrinsically ensuring equitable and informed patient, professional and public involvement throughout medicines development processes, from design to implementation. This includes new and more transparent approaches for clinical trials that should be inclusive for non-commercial actors including authorities and agencies and in accordance with public health priorities. Improving health and digital literacy for all is a keystone of that approach, on which we are working in several dimensions. The importance of defining and setting clear criteria for unmet medical needs and how to address them equitably in diverse global and European contexts will be vital in ensuring equity and universal access.

It is unsustainable that only 3% of average health budgets are allocated for public health, and prevention research often averages only around 5% of health research spending. To “build back fairer and better” that must change. We note and commend the new model of the *EU4Health* Programme which will allocate a minimum of 20% to prevention and promotion, the achievement of which has been largely based on public demand.

We also note the significant example of increasing health system restrictions on medicines for people suffering chronic pain, for which physical and mental health promotion measures will be advised. That is partly for sustainability and cost reasons, but mainly because emerging evidence

shows certain medicines may not always be as effective as claimed. This is an example why new social contracts between public decision makers and private supply chains are needed on effective prevention measures and distribution of research, development, and implementation budgets.

### **What promising actions is EuroHealthNet undertaking to help improve access?**

We coordinate IMMUNION, a new EU-funded consortium on vaccination, which will:

- Strengthen the *Coalition for Vaccination's* long-term sustainability and visibility.
- Improve use of validated training materials and resources for health professionals, provide training opportunities and enhance collaboration between public health institutions, health professionals, students, and the media.
- Understand drivers of vaccine inequalities within countries and address vaccination coverage issues in vulnerable and underserved populations.

Comparable and high-quality data is fundamental to monitor health inequalities and identify the pathways through which such inequalities originate. By building the world's first *Global Burden of Health Inequalities* data warehouse and by adding a health equity dimension to the *European Social Survey*, the CHAIN research consortium will lead in collecting such data and making it publicly available. This initiative, already well known in Norway and the UN agencies, includes ongoing studies into, *inter alia*, ethics and global justice in medicines, including TRIPS.

EuroHealthNet is also engaged in a new EU funded research project called RIVER-EU (*'Reducing Inequalities in Vaccine uptake In the European Region - Engaging Underserved communities'*). The project will work to improve access to MMR and HPV vaccines among specific underserved populations by identifying and removing health system barriers, identify promising interventions that will be piloted, and convert results into evidence-based guidelines to address equitable access to vaccination across Europe.

We have also established the *European Health Inequalities Portal* at <https://health-inequalities.eu/> as a comprehensive information hub for Europe on actions to improve equity.

### **How can WHO Europe and EuroHealthNet collaborate in further efforts to improve population access?**

EuroHealthNet will help to connect these and other actions with WHO Europe and the *Oslo Medicines Initiative* and disseminate knowledge with stakeholders, policy makers and the public.

We have an established and active long-term liaison with WHO Europe Regional Office, its Geographically Dispersed Offices, and via our members to the Regional Committee. This is now being enhanced to systematically support and mutually collaborate on taking forward effective implementation of the WHO Europe *Programme of Work* and the EuroHealthNet *Strategic Development Plan 2021-26*. Further joint announcements on these developments are imminent.

We welcome the opportunity to include in these actions support for the *Oslo Medicines Initiative* and add the value of the EuroHealthNet Partnership to contribute to progress on common aims of Equity, Solidarity, Transparency and Sustainability.

For further information on our work please see [www.eurohealthnet.eu](http://www.eurohealthnet.eu)