



State of Health in the EU: Voluntary Exchange

Health systems responding to the climate crisis

3 October 2024, 9:30 - 16:00

Radisson Blu Waterfront Hotel & Stockholm Waterfront Congress Centre, Nils Ericssons Plan 4

The climate crisis and health systems

The purpose of this workshop is to, through both national and international learning, inspire participants to expand and intensify efforts towards ensuring an effective response to the climate crisis, with a focus on health systems. The meeting will focus on strategies to address the complex and consequential relation between climate change, public health and health systems. It aims to provide an overview on what can be done to ensure health systems can avoid or absorb the negative consequences of climate change (“adaptation”) and how the health sector can reduce its environmental impact and contribute to carbon neutrality (“mitigation”).

Adapting health systems to climate changes

There are many strategies that health systems can adopt to better adapt to climate change, although not all of them will have the same relevance and priority for Sweden:

- Focusing more on developing policies and actions aiming at health promotion and prevention at the health system as well as the individual levels. In parallel, working to reduce unnecessary care interventions.
- Fostering community engagement and education: Engage the public in understanding health risks associated with climate change and promote behaviors to mitigate or adapt to these risks. Moreover, involve communities in designing and implementing local adaptation strategies with particular attention to vulnerable populations (elderly, children, pregnant women, homeless, outdoor workers etc.).
- Intensifying public health interventions like prioritizing vaccinations in areas vulnerable to climate-sensitive infectious diseases and implementing robust measures to control disease vectors such as mosquitoes.
- Training healthcare professionals to develop the knowledge and skills to recognize and manage climate-related health issues.

- Strengthening surveillance and monitoring by enhancing systems to detect and respond promptly to outbreaks of relevant climate-sensitive diseases and improve tracking of environmental changes such as temperature and air quality, to better predict and mitigate climate-related health impacts.
- Enabling research and innovation: Promote research on the health impacts of climate change and effective adaptation strategies, to develop and deploy technologies such as telemedicine and mobile health units, to address climate-related health challenges.
- Enhancing climate-related crisis preparedness, by upgrading facilities to withstand extreme weather events and ensure continuity of care and developing and implementing disaster response plans, including stockpiling essential medicines and supplies.

All these strategies require robust policy support and planning that incorporates climate change considerations, including securing funding for climate-resilient health initiatives and establishing mechanisms to ensure efficient resource allocation. By implementing such strategies, the health sector can better prepare for and respond to the challenges posed by climate change, thereby safeguarding public health and improving overall resilience of both systems and individuals.

Mitigating the effects of the health sector on the environment

Health systems generate a significant ecological footprint, making the concept of greening healthcare a crucial strategy for countries striving for carbon-neutrality and climate change mitigation. Different strategies can be employed to advance towards these sustainability goals, at the health system and the healthcare facility levels.

- Redesigning health systems to reduce unnecessary activity and burden: Firstly, investing in disease prevention and health promotion is environmentally and economically sustainable, in addition to their overall value for health and wellbeing. Secondly, it is important to minimize wasteful practices in healthcare delivery, by integrating care across various sectors, reducing low-value care, and exploring new models of care that might contribute to this goal, such as through telemedicine. Next to contributing to health system goals such as better outcomes, person-centeredness and improved access, quality and efficiency of care, such transformations can also reduce unnecessary resource consumption and environmental burden.
- Greening healthcare delivery: measures to promote energy transition in healthcare facilities, sustainable mobility of patients and health workers, and the circular economy within healthcare facilities can greatly reduce their ecological footprint. This entails transitioning to renewable energy sources, promoting eco-friendly modes of transportation, and implementing practices that reduce, reuse, and recycle resources within healthcare facilities. Furthermore, incorporating environmental criteria in public procurement (e.g. for medicines or medical devices) can further contribute to these goals. Guidance on how these goals can be achieved should be developed while considering local contexts.

Format

In this workshop, we will examine and discuss concrete experiences in planning and implementing policies and strategies for adaptation and mitigation in health systems. We will bring international experts that can provide both an overview of relevant measures implemented in different settings and zoom in on concrete examples and highlight successes and challenges.

Agenda

Thursday 3 rd October 2024	
Radisson Blu Waterfront Hotel & Stockholm Waterfront Congress Centre, Nils Ericssons Plan 4	
09:30-09:50	<p>Introductory session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome & rationale for the voluntary exchange <i>National Board of Health and Welfare (Ingrid Schmidt), European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (Dimitra Panteli & Matthias Wismar)</i> Introductory words <i>Public Health Agency of Sweden (Olivia Wigzell), National Board of Health and Welfare (Björn Eriksson)</i> Objectives of the day & housekeeping rules <i>Dimitra Panteli, Matthias Wismar, Ingrid Schmidt</i>
09:50-10:50	<p>Taking stock (Facilitation: Dimitra Panteli)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sweden and the climate crisis <i>Petter Ljungman, MD, Karolinska institute</i> Keynote: the climate crisis and main adaptation and mitigation strategies <i>Dorota Jarosinska, WHO European Centre for Environment and Health (online)</i> Spotlight: indicators at the intersection of climate and health <i>Michael Müller, OECD</i> The ethical case: <i>Sven- Eric Söder, The Swedish National Council on Medical Ethics</i> Facilitated discussion
10:50-11:00	Coffee break
11:00-12:30	<p>Adapting health systems to the climate crisis (Facilitation: Matthias Wismar)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Country policies and strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview <i>Andrea Schmidt, Austrian Public Health Institute (online)</i> Case studies & expert input: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sweden <i>Ida Knutsson, The Public Health Agency</i> Ireland <i>Colin O’Hehir, Department of Health</i> UK <i>Hiten Patel, NHS England</i> Austria <i>Stefan Eichwalder, Austrian Ministry of Health</i> Facilitated discussion Implementing adaptation policies and strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitated discussion
12:30-13:30	Lunch
13:30-15:00	<p>Reducing the climate- footprint of health systems Country policies and strategies (Facilitation: Dimitra Panteli)</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Overview <i>Daniel Eriksson, Nordic Centre for Sustainable Healthcare</i> ○ Case studies & expert input: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sweden <i>Ida Persson Cofina, Lund University, Caisa Laurell Karolinska institute</i> <i>Carolina Pettersson, Stockholm County</i> ▪ Ireland <i>Colin O’Hehir, Department of Health</i> ▪ Denmark <i>Maria Gaden, Center for Sustainable Hospitals, Central Denmark Region</i> ▪ UK <i>Hiten Patel, NHS England</i> ▪ Austria <i>Stefan Eichwalder, Austrian Ministry of Health</i> ○ Facilitated discussion ● Implementing mitigation policies and strategies ○ Facilitated discussion
15:00-16:00	<p><i>Summing up: What’s in it for Sweden, what role for the National Board of Health and welfare and the Public Health agency - how to support the regions?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Input statement, NBHW, and PHA ● Facilitated discussion