

2022 Health at a Glance Report highlights the need to rethink investments in health after the COVID-19 pandemic

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Over the last two years, major crises have had dramatic impacts on patient population health across Europe. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the provision of primary care, cancer screening and treatment, care continuity, and elective surgery, impacting health outcomes of patients across Europe. The 2022 Health at a Glance Report, examined the key challenges to develop stronger, more resilient health systems following the acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report highlights that, despite talk of health spending as an investment rather than a cost, there have been few policy changes to reflect this. The data confirms underinvestment in healthcare along with inefficiencies in the way available resources are allocated. This undermines the sustainability of healthcare systems and access to medicines for patients, which weakens public health:

- Mortality rates from cardiovascular diseases in Central and Eastern Europe are 3 – 4 times higher than in the rest of Europe [1]
- The mortality impact of COVID-19 has been the highest in Central and Eastern Europe [2]
- Differences in cancer survival rates across the EU exceed 25% and timely access to treatment is unequal. For example, access to the first line cancer medicine Rituximab in Central and Eastern Europe is significantly lower than EU average [3]
- Today, in Italy, almost one third of Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) patients eligible for biological therapy are not receiving it [4]

The EU can easily address these treatment gaps with clear generic and biosimilar medicines uptake policies. The EU should help Member States leverage cost-efficient generic and biosimilar medicine options to increase the efficiency of spending in healthcare and to improve health outcomes across Europe.

Adrian van den Hoven, Director General of Medicines for Europe commented: *“The State of Health in the EU data is clear: health outcomes are dismal in many EU countries. The EU can help Member States improve patient access and health outcomes with the timely availability and use of generic and biosimilar medicines. In an era of severely constrained healthcare, we need to treat more patients with generic and biosimilar medicines and to close the gaps in medicines access across Europe. This facilitates patient access to the therapies they need to manage their condition and to improve the sustainability of national healthcare systems. It is the responsibility of stakeholders to look for effective policies that promote sustainable patient access to treatments.”*

Resource hub

The OECD-European Commission 2022 Health at a Glance report is available in full at https://health.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-12/2022_healthatglance_rep_en.pdf

Data points

- [1] https://health.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-12/2022_healthatglance_rep_en.pdf
- [2] https://health.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-12/2022_healthatglance_rep_en.pdf
- [3] <https://www.medicinesforeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Removing-access-barriers-in-Central-and-Eastern-Europe-April-2022.pdf>
- [4] <https://www.egualia.it/it/component/edocman/3087-i-dati-clicon-sul-sottotrattamento-con-biologici-24-maggio-2022/viewdocument/3087.html?Itemid=0>