

10 Years of EUREGHA – moving towards a new approach to achieve innovative, sustainable, future-proof health systems delivering better care for all

10 fruitful years, on to 10 more!

EUREGHA, the reference network for regional and local health authorities proudly celebrates its **10th anniversary** this year.

Over the past 10 years, EUREGHA has grown from an informal collaboration into a firmly established Brussels-based network that brings together 19 members and acts as a **bridge for regional and local health authorities**: between them, and with the whole health ecosystems – from people, to health and care systems actors, to European institutions, policies and frameworks.

This 10th Anniversary comes at a particular time for healthcare at European level. The COVID-19 emergency has painfully exposed the weaknesses of our current health and social care systems, causing health authorities across the entire world to rethink their priorities and objectives. Furthermore, the pandemic also shook things up at European level, leading to the discussion about building a European Health Union, large scale initiatives such as the European Health Data Space, and new and enriched funding programmes such as EU4Health.

In this context, EUREGHA's objective becomes even more important: bringing regions together to **contribute to achieving innovative, sustainable, future-proof health systems delivering more accessible and better care for all**. Members' brainstorming and discussions at the Annual General Assembly 2022 shaped a renewed approach, mixing the traditional EUREGHA flagship focus with new angles needed to reach its objectives in this evolving environment.

Through this new approach, EUREGHA views the future of healthcare through **three lenses**:

- **Value-based healthcare**

The construction of sustainable and resilient health systems happens through a value-driven and people-centred approach. Value-based healthcare is based on the premise that we need to systematically measure the outcomes that matter to people and relate these outcomes to the cost it takes to achieve them. We strongly believe the value-based approach is the right solution to fix efficiency issues and health inequalities, and it is the most strategic way to ensure sustainability in the face of finite resources. To achieve high value, we must deliver the best possible outcomes in the most efficient way. As a cross-point between the service and policy sides, regional and local authorities represent a primary and indispensable actor in implementing this approach on the ground and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of European health systems.

- **Digital transformation**

For decades now, digital technology has been changing the way we design and deliver healthcare services. Digital solutions and health data can facilitate care provision, accelerate diagnosis and treatment and support health policy making. Furthermore, digital solutions can be vital in supporting health promotion, meeting people's needs and improving care quality. This trend has been made even more evident by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has accelerated digitalization of health systems across Europe. However, to achieve its potential, digital transformation of health must be embedded in health policy and strategic planning to fully exploit its potential while also considering key challenges. Regions are at the forefront of designing and implementing this transformation towards the construction of a European Health Union with digital as a core element.

- **Communities and co-creation**

The pandemic showed us how health, wellbeing, and social inclusion are intertwined and often overlapping. We need to rethink policies and practices providing for and intervening in wider ecosystems, including traditional and new stakeholders. No one is exclusively right, everyone is a bit right from their subjective viewpoint. Community is a key concept in planning and implementing policies aiming to improve citizens' well-being and a central element for EUREGHA. Engagement and participation of people and all relevant stakeholders are essential factors contributing to a sense of community and ownership, that means having all the actors on board working together towards a common objective. Acting as a bridge between people, institutions and all other relevant actors, local and regional authorities are key in fostering participatory co-creation models and mechanisms for health policies and implementation, from local to European level.

As we are looking at the future of healthcare through these lenses, EUREGHA identifies a set of **enablers** representing how we can achieve it:

- **Policies and frameworks**, setting the scene and providing the right incentives and instruments to achieve change.
- **Education, skills and literacy development**, for both health workforce and people.
- **Procurement strategies**, adapted to innovation and a value-based approach "to make things/change happen".
- **Health systems integration**, within and beyond borders.
- **Health Promotion and Prevention**, to tackle health challenges before the treatment level.
- **Co-creation approaches**, to ensure that the healthcare community needs are fully taken into consideration in health policy and implementation.
- **Smart Specialization in Health**, building on cross-regional cooperation that would advance regional competitiveness, with each region completing its own value chain.

EUREGHA will apply this approach to **key focus needs**, identifying main areas of interest for the association. These include strengthening our health workforce, improving **cross-border healthcare**, fighting main chronic diseases such as **cancer, cardiovascular disease, mental health, and obesity**, and promoting **active and healthy long living**. On top of the above, EUREGHA will keep working dynamically with its members to activate and engage our network on other present and emerging issues, such as the relation between health systems and the environment, keeping in mind an ‘health in all policies’ approach.

The EUREGHA secretariat and its members are delighted to celebrate 10 years working towards better healthcare in Europe, and excited to continue the work to bridge distances between Brussels and the European regions. **For the next 10 years and beyond, we are looking forward to continue bundling our strengths to work towards better healthcare systems that work effectively for everyone.**

Would you like to be part of this movement? Have a look at testimonies from our members about the EUREGHA added value and future outlook, and join our network!