Achieving health equity in the EU

Society should provide a fair platform for all citizens to reach good health.

Differences in health outcomes across the EU suggest the platform for health is not equal in our society.

Diseases and inequalities in the EU are enormous. In 2016, there were 1.25x more mental conditions leading to ‘lifetime very poor health’ in the Mediterranean region than in the Nordic countries.

People in Latin America can expect to live an extra 19 years compared to people in Sub-Saharan Africa.

People are twice as likely to be in a ‘very good’ health state in the Nordic countries compared to the Mediterranean region.

Healthcare

Sedentary lifestyles, lack of access to fresh produce, and high rates of poverty are contributing to the rising number of chronic and non-communicable diseases in many EU regions.

People in urban areas are twice as likely to be overweight, with 65% of the population in the Mediterranean region.

Social Inclusion

The number of people living in poverty has increased significantly in the EU, with 1 in 5 people living in poverty or social exclusion.

Education

Health education is a key factor in reducing health inequalities. However, education levels are unevenly distributed across the EU.

People in high poverty areas are more likely to have a low level of education. The top 10% of the population are twice as likely to complete tertiary education compared to their counterparts.

Employment

People living with disabilities are significantly less likely to be employed than their non-disabled peers.

Young people in the EU are twice as likely to be unemployed as their counterparts in the Mediterranean region.

These inequities across health determinants create a divide in the opportunities EU citizens have to live in good health.

With its commitment to equality and solidarity, the EU has a duty to act.

The EU can take the following actions to fix the gap:

1. Improve understanding of health inequity
   - Conduct research to identify the root causes of health inequity
   - Implement policies to address social determinants of health

2. Empower member states to act
   - Provide financial support to member states for health equity initiatives
   - Facilitate cross-border collaboration on health equity

3. Drive change
   - Develop a comprehensive EU health equity strategy
   - Integrate health equity into all policy making processes

References