

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER
Use of Indicators in EU Health Policy
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This presentation will explore actual and planned use of indicators in promoting the health policy of the European Union (EU). An attempt will also be made to foresee developments in the coming years. Legal, regulatory and policy basis of the executive of the EU, European Commission (EC) and its Directorate - General Health and Consumer protection (SANCO), to get involved in the health care services despite `subsidiarity' and `exclusive right' principles will be explained. Also discussed an analysis of relations between the SANCO policy on health, its three priority actions, European Union Public Health Information Network (EUPHIN) as one of the key implementation instruments, and the intended beneficiaries of the system (professionals, public and policy makers).

EC's Health Monitoring Program will be briefly introduced, focusing on one of its components, the European Community Health Indicators Project. Within the set of indicators proposed in the Project, indices related to health systems and specifically those related to quality and performance of health systems will be discussed.

Traveling further through the indices maze, we will follow just one of the proposed quality indicators, namely hospital infections. Based on the experiences of the Hospitals in Europe Link for Infection Control through Surveillance (HELICS) project, ways and means of actual data exchange among Member States will be explored. Successes and pitfalls of this endeavor, now in its 7. year, could potentially be of benefit for the similar projects and systems being developed now.

It seems that in the future we will have to provide much more real transparency of our health systems in the EU, for all the parties involved. Getting to health system information might, however, require traveling on a long and bumpy way. For the time being, the most realistic option could be harmonization of existing national and local quality registration systems, using some form of the common framework and / or recognition system. Eventually, this could be supplemented, and possibly in time replaced, by a common set.