

CONFERENCE

“COOPERATION WITHIN THE REGION: A WAY TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTHCARE IN CEE” 12-13 SEPTEMBER, SOFIA (BULGARIA)

OUTLINE

1. INTRODUCTION

The Conference “**Cooperation within the Region: A Way to Improve Access to Quality Healthcare in CEE**” is a conference of the Patient Access Partnership on Equity of Access to Quality Healthcare (PACT), organised by the National Patients’ Organisation – Bulgaria in cooperation with the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Bulgaria and the European Patients’ Forum (EPF). The two-day event will be held on 12-13 September in Sofia (venue to be confirmed), welcoming PACT affiliates from the countries in the CEE region (Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, and the three Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, including Greece, Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey).

2. BACKGROUND

Ensuring access to quality healthcare across the EU Member States by tackling health inequalities has been a key concern for the past several years, which has attracted significant attention both at EU and local levels. More specifically, the issue was notably raised by patient organisations back in 2012 with the First Conference on Health Inequalities in the EU Member States (Bulgaria), followed by a number of emblematic high-level political decisions including the Lithuanian EU Presidency Conference on Sustainable Health Systems – Vilnius Declaration (2013), Commission Communication on Effective, Accessible and Resilient Health Systems (2014), Council Conclusions on the Economic Crisis and Impact on Health (2014), Council Conclusions New medicines for the benefit of patients (2014), Latvian EU Conference on Universal Health – RIGA roadmap (2015) and the Sustainable Development Goals (2015).

Amidst and in line with these developments, the Patient Access Partnership was formed - a patient-led multi-stakeholder network bringing together patients, the medical and public health community, industry and the EU and Member States policy-makers and institutions in order to develop and move forward on innovative solutions to reduce inequities in access to quality healthcare in the EU. In view of the significant challenges ahead, the Patient Access Partnership is determined to play a key role in contributing further to the efforts of improving access to healthcare.

Against this background, the Conference offers a timely opportunity for the regional healthcare community to re-affirm its political commitment to address the gaps in access to healthcare by discussing potential measures and innovative instruments for further actions.

The focus of the Conference will be provided by discussions on best practices and cooperation opportunities at regional and nation level, the implications and significance of the EU Semester, the opportunities that the EU structural funds provide as well as the added value and the practical implications of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

3. OBJECTIVES

The overall purpose of the Conference is to provide for open and informative high-level discussions on access with a view of formulating concrete proposals for potential instruments and actions as a contribution to the negotiations and work conducted at national and EU-level. More specifically, the objectives of the conference can be summarised as follows:

- Discuss the barriers to ensuring equal access to quality healthcare in CEE countries;

- Encourage informative discussion on the existing sustainable mechanisms for improving healthcare systems, including actions in line with the recommendations set forward in the [Sustainable Development Goals](#);
- Increase cooperation between policy-makers and stakeholders within and between the countries from the region;
- Raise awareness on the added value of existing best-practice examples of cooperation between stakeholders for improving access to healthcare and encouraging cooperation in neighbouring countries;
- Provide recommendations on follow-up actions to ensure better access to quality health services in the region

4. TOPICS

The conference will seek to advance the understanding and promote the achievement of consensus by:

- 1) Discussing possibilities for increasing cooperation between policy-makers and stakeholders between and within countries by promoting best practices exchange on successful cooperation models;
- 2) Raising awareness on the rationale, implications and added value of the European Semester;
- 3) Improving the understanding on the opportunities and funding mechanisms available through the EU structural funds;
- 4) Raise awareness on the significance of the Sustainable Development Goals as a broader sustainability agenda, and more specifically, on the need to “ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”

5. FORMAT

The conference will begin with an inaugural session, followed by plenary discussions between government officials, experts and representatives of the stakeholder groups. The second day of the conference will consist of panel discussions, beginning with an introduction by one or two distinguished speakers to enable the participants to assess the various perspectives and options from a theoretical perspective. In addition, workshop sessions will provide an opportunity for technical discussions and outlining possibilities for follow-up actions.

6. PARTICIPATION

Invitations will be sent to:

- PACT stakeholders from the respective countries (patients, medical and public health experts)
- PACT industry partners
- Media

7. VENUE AND LOGISTICS

The Conference will take place in Sofia, Bulgaria (venue to be confirmed). Information about travel and accommodation arrangements will follow shortly.

Participation in the conference may be a subject to a registration fee of €200.

8. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The Conference will aim to provide the following outcomes:

- Identify the main hurdles in access to quality healthcare in the CEE countries;
- Highlight common challenges and encourage joint action initiatives;
- Outline key EU mechanisms which can facilitate the efforts of improving access to care and treatment;
- Showcase best-practice examples of successful cooperation for better access to care;
- Foster cooperation between and within countries in all levels of the healthcare system;
- Ensure united and empowered patient movements in CEE

9. RELATED DELIVERABLES

- A summary of the discussions reflecting the views of the participants;
- A web link to include the registration form, documentation, statements and presentations that have been delivered;
- A press release
- A video footage of selected sessions

NB: A high-level meeting, initiated and hosted by Minister of Health Dr Petar Moskov, will be held separately. More information will be provided in due time.

Bibliography:

UN Resolution 70/1, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1 (25 September 2015). Available from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>