

Regions working together
to improve health and wellbeing through equity, strategic delivery alliances and good governance

THE REGIONS FOR HEALTH NETWORK Göteborg Manifesto

Today, 6 November 2012, we the members of the Regions for Health Network have come together to celebrate 20 years of work with the World Health Organization, to launch a new phase of development and to invite new regions to join.

We are meeting at a crucial moment. Recent events have re-emphasized to countries the vital importance of health, its complex roots and the need for urgent action.

On 12 September 2012, the 53 Member States of the WHO European Region endorsed the new European Health Policy - Health 2020. This manifesto supports and is inspired by that new policy.

The strategic objectives of Health 2020 are stronger equity and better governance for health. With the endorsement of this policy framework, European Member States have committed themselves to solidarity and equal access as the guiding values for organizing and funding health systems. They accepted a 'whole of government' and 'whole of society' approach to tackling poor health and health inequalities. The achievement of these will increasingly depend on decisions taken at the sub-national level.

In the fast-changing European context, we the regions are vitally important. Whatever our name or precise responsibilities, regions act as bridges between national ambitions and local delivery. Many regions have significant political and administrative functions, in areas that matter hugely to health - the environment, housing, food, health care, transport and education – to name just a few. Through these, we carry a heavy responsibility for the economic, social and human development for our own people and for our countries.

We are also facilitators, catalysts, and advocates of the right to the highest level of health for all. The regional level offers important opportunities for private and not-for-profit sectors, civic society and citizens' groups to come together. We are close enough to our citizens to hear what they say and see what they need. We have the capacity to mobilize local resources to protect and promote the rights of all our citizens, particularly those who are poor and vulnerable.

Now is the time to move forward. With this Manifesto the members of the Regions for Health Network commit themselves to work together in new ways to increase equity and improve governance for health, in line with the values and principles of Health 2020. We commit ourselves to action across the whole health agenda, with a sharper focus on the environmental, social and economic determinants that can foster or damage health.

We believe we can work best if we work together. The Network is special in its relationship with WHO, its focus on policy and action across Europe, and its potential as an engine for generating new evidence and know-how. We as members believe in promoting excellence and effectiveness in our regions by sharing resources and good practice in a spirit of cooperation and solidarity.

Equipped with new vision and focus drawn from Health 2020, we can become an effective and unique cooperation platform for its implementation. In our new phase of development we shall concentrate our efforts on bringing people together to share know-how and tackle hard issues. We will use every opportunity to work together and help each other.

As members, we will take action locally and freely share our expertise, energy and knowledge with others. Together we aim to prove that the goals in Health 2020 are right and realistic and that regions can take a strong lead in improving the health of Europeans. With you we can develop and drive forward this agenda. Join us.