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#### COVER NOTE

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Council/Delegations

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Subject: **Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council  
session on 9 December 2019**  
State of health in the EU  
*- Information from the Commission*

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Delegations will find attached a document from the Commission services on the above-mentioned subject to be raised under "Any Other Business" at the meeting of the Council (EPSCO) on 9 December 2019.

**EPSCO HEALTH COUNCIL – 9 DECEMBER 2019**  
**INFORMATION FROM THE COMMISSION SERVICES**  
**THE STATE OF HEALTH IN THE EU**

*The European Commission launched its second iteration of the State of Health in the EU cycle (2018-20) with the publication of thirty Country Health Profiles<sup>1</sup> and their Companion Report<sup>2</sup> on 28 November 2019.*

***State of Health in the EU: Supporting knowledge brokering across the EU***

The *State of Health in the EU* is an infrastructure to make health system information, expertise and best practices easily accessible to policymakers and policy influencers. It is steered by the European Commission, but relies on the internationally renowned expertise of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (Observatory) in its on-going effort to support knowledge brokering across the EU. The cycle pools the latest evidence on health and captures it in a series of concise, digestible reports<sup>3</sup>.

The *State of Health in the EU* cycle supports Member States by strengthening the evidence base. In turn, the cycle provides the Commission with quality material to feed into the analytical phase of the European Semester, informing its Country Reports with sound cross-EU and country-specific insights. It also provides data and policy analysis to support EU level cooperation, as relevant.

***Country Health Profiles: A staple of knowledge and information among the EU health policy community***

Experts from the OECD and the Observatory have now prepared a set of 30 Country Health Profiles, covering the 28 EU Member States, as well as Iceland and Norway. The *State of Health in the EU*'s Country Health Profiles are designed to be a one-stop-shop for knowledge and information on a country's health system, put into the perspective of a cross-EU comparison.

The Country Health Profiles are a comprehensive resource that covers the latest health policy challenges and responses in each country. The design of each profile balances depth and brevity to make the analysis accessible and useful to a broad audience. Although the profiles are built according to a standard template and methodology, each profile's structure has been adapted to country specificities, so as to maximise the relevance of each analysis.

Each Country Health Profile provides a short synthesis of the health status in the country, the determinants of health (focussing on behavioural risk factors), an account of the organisation of the health system, as well as an analysis of each health system's effectiveness, accessibility and resilience. The latter follows the triple objectives set out in the 2014 Communication from the Commission to transform health systems across Europe and make them fit for the future<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/health/state/country\\_profiles\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/health/state/country_profiles_en)

<sup>2</sup> SWD(2019)377 final, Council document 14749/19.

<sup>3</sup> The joint OECD-Commission report *Health at a Glance: Europe* kicks off each two-year *State of Health in the EU* cycle with a horizontal, cross-country assessment of national health systems' performance in the EU. Its latest edition, *Health at a Glance: Europe 2018*, was published in November 2018 and marked the launch of the second iteration of the *State of Health in the EU* cycle (2018-20).

<sup>4</sup> COM/2014/215.

### ***Companion Report 2019: Showcasing some of the biggest trends in the transformation of our health systems***

The Commission presents a Companion Report alongside the 2019 Country Health Profiles to shine a light on trends that can be found in most, if not all, EU Member States. This touches on demographic and technological changes, the shift towards primary care and prevention, and the burden put upon the health workforce. The Companion Report showcases five pertinent cross-EU takeaways from the analysis underpinning the profiles (Part 1), while also adding their country-specific key findings (Part 2).

Part 1 of the Companion Report is structured along the triple objectives of effectiveness, accessibility and resilience mentioned above. Here, the effectiveness dimension is solely geared towards health promotion and disease prevention, with the first two chapters focusing on vaccine hesitancy (Chapter 1) and digital transformation (Chapter 2). With regard to accessibility, the Companion Report attempts to gain a clearer picture of the barriers that EU citizens experience across Europe to accessing health care, factoring in socio-economic characteristics as well as clinical profiles (Chapter 3). Lastly, to provide some insight into the resilience of EU health systems, the report deals with the topics of task shifting in health service delivery (Chapter 4) and examines the possible implications of the product life cycle of pharmaceuticals for safe, effective and affordable medicines (Chapter 5).

### ***Improving information, expertise and exchange of best practice***

The thirty Country Health Profiles were published alongside the Companion Report on Thursday 28 November 2019, with a press conference hosted by Commissioner Andriukaitis. Some national launch events are organised in Member States' Commission offices from November 2019 through January 2020.

The Commission, together with the experts from the OECD and the Observatory, are available to discuss findings from the Country Health Profiles and Companion Report with the relevant authorities at national level, at their request. These voluntary exchanges are tailored to the needs and preferences of each Member State or group of Member States.