

HEALTH EVIDENCE NETWORK SYNTHESIS REPORT 52

Key policies for addressing the social determinants of health and health inequities

Matthew Saunders | Ben Barr | Phil McHale | Christoph Hamelmann



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Abstract

Evidence indicates that actions within four main themes (early child development, fair employment and decent work, social protection, and the living environment) are likely to have the greatest impact on the social determinants of health and health inequities. A systematic search and analysis of recommendations and policy guidelines from intergovernmental organizations and international bodies identified practical policy options for action on social determinants within these four themes. Policy options focused on early childhood education and care; child poverty; investment strategies for an inclusive economy; active labour market programmes; working conditions; social cash transfers; affordable housing; and planning and regulatory mechanisms to improve air quality and mitigate climate change. Applying combinations of these policy options alongside effective governance for health equity should enable WHO European Region Member States to reduce health inequities and synergize efforts to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Keywords

HEALTH EQUITY, HEALTH POLICY, HEALTH STATUS DISPARITIES, SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH, SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

ALMPs	active labour market programmes
ECEC	early childhood education and care
EU	European Union
ILO	International Labour Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SROI	social return on investment



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