



10 Theses on Regional Health and Wealth

“Regions invest in Health – and it pays off for both people and the economy”

Satellite Session, Tallinn 27 June 2008:
Health systems decentralization in the European
region - Regional perspectives.
Regions for Health Network (RHN)

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Context: Decentralization

Major objectives of decentralization:

- improve technical efficiency
- increase allocative efficiency
- empower local governments
- increase accountability, equity, and quality of health services

Source: European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies,
Decentralization in health care (modified)

All this is implied in the paper “Ten theses on regional health and wealth” – but there is more...



Ten theses – major objectives:

- Show the economic relevance of the health sector
- Describe the mechanisms of health care / h. economy
- Show synergies between health & regional economy
- Promote regional commitment in health / h. economy
- Illustrate the relevance of health to other political fields
- Show exemplary regional strategies to introduce and enforce health in the overall political context

The ten theses consider aspects of decentralization – but the focus is on connecting health to other political fields and showing its larger social, economical, and environmental relevance



Health 21, the Lisbon Agenda and “Health in all policies”:
common values of equity, solidarity and participation

Concept of “**Health and Wealth**”: importance of health not
just for the health sector, but other sectors as well

10 theses (annotated) of the Regions for Health Network:
Explicitly linking health and wealth at the regional level
will make a powerful contribution to the improvement of
health of citizens in today’s Europe



1. Regions are active promoters for better health

Regions increasingly committed to health:

- want to become more attractive to their inhabitants
- see the growth potential of health-related industries

2. Good health is a responsibility of the regions

Issues on every region's policy agenda:

- actual delivery of health services
- support for local initiatives to promote health and prevent diseases



3. Healthy people are the key to a productive economy

Good health affecting productivity by

- avoiding the costs of illness
- affecting learning capacity and hence chances to enhance income

4. Health industry is in a paradigm shift – yesterday a burden, tomorrow an opportunity for the economy

Health sector meeting real demand: starting point for many regions to look upon health services as an asset



5. Health industry is an incubator of employment, technological progress and innovation

About 50% of all high technology development projects relating to applications in the health sector

6. Health industry generates income – to the benefit of the local economic cycle

Total income generated in the health industries: a major multiplier in the local and regional economy



***7. Procurement stands between local markets,
modern management and (inter-)national champion***

Hospitals = big consumers; procurement a powerful driver
of the health sector within the overall economy

***8. Quality and innovation in health services need the
regional base***

Health = created on the local/regional level; health
services to be close to the patient



9. International mobility of health care providers and consumers carries both risks and benefits

- Highly developed solutions in one region accelerating developments in other regions
- To counter "patient tourism": regions should take the initiative to transfer know-how

10. Health and wealth must be thought anew

Health industries tend to support a balance between economic, social and environmental development



But:

- Too much emphasis on the economic benefits of the health industries: may distract attention from the need to protect fair access to high quality services for all
- Message that good health can be bought: might undermine other efforts to promote good health

How to reconcile?



Operationalizing “health and wealth” leads to an overall
“Health in all policies” strategy – with the need:

- to assess health impact (understood as both the impact *of* and *on* health)
- to connect other political fields to health-related thought and to integrate health into political priorities
- to formulate the benefits of bringing health-related, economical, social, and environmental issues together



Health and Wealth action plan for regions

Suggestions for regions:

1. **Regional health and wellbeing governance:** In addition to existing arrangements for the management of health care systems, developing a parallel approach for health and well-being
2. **Making visible the economic costs and benefits of population health,** including the costs resulting from inequalities in life expectancy and health status



3. **Calculating the tangible benefits of health and well-being**
4. **Improved asset management of health and well-being:** regional mechanisms to identify and release these assets more systematically
5. **Increasing local procurement:** ambitious targets for the percentage of the public and private sector spend commissioned from within the region itself



New assessment of the health economy and its many links
to overall social life: a step in the right direction

Challenge to do both: pursuing health economic goals and
the grander vision of health