
The Challenges Encountered by Health Managers in South-Eastern Europe



Several common challenges faced by health managers in the South-Eastern European (SEE) region were revealed in a recent report by the European Health Management Association. The aim is to underline these challenges in order to identify ways to support health managers in the region as they move forward with their activities.

Many of the health systems in the region have a highly centralised governance structure, with decisions made at the national or regional level. This makes it harder for health managers to address specific needs and challenges on a local level. Inevitably, they struggle to implement locally adapted models of care and leaves decision-makers with a lack of accountability.

Many health systems in the SEE region do not provide their staff with adequate wages, access to professional development and training opportunities. Without effective strategies to train and retain their health workforce, health systems suffer from inadequate staffing levels. In combination, these factors accelerate the rates of burnout of care professionals, with many choosing to work in health systems abroad.

Many countries within this region have limited financing available for their health systems. Due to limited financing support and insufficient training in financing, health managers may find it challenging to make cost-effective decisions. This is further complicated by the lack of tools such as health technology assessment (HTA). Without a tool like HTA, health systems struggle to adopt sound financial management practices.

Several countries in the region have struggled with finding a system for data collection. With fragmented methods and systems, health managers struggle to monitor performance and are unable to develop evidence-based policy. In addition, the lack of new technologies and information systems means the workload of care professionals cannot be as easily reduced.

The last challenge outlines the issue with effective communication between countries, experts and professionals. Unfortunately, informal collaboration is complicated by language barriers, differences in health systems and variances in population health requirements. Effective communication is hindered by geographic and cultural divides; differences in the ideologies of stakeholders make it even harder for health managers to effectively share important information and resources, including best practices.

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