



Health inequalities: Supporting the vulnerable

Healthcare settings



- Introduce evidence-based **anti-stigma training programmes** for health care workers involving community members who convey their own experiences with discrimination and its impact.
- In accordance with the ICD update process, change or **update the disease nomenclature**, removing stigmatizing terms (e.g. “alcoholic”) to allow efficient communication without the risk of further misconceptions, discrimination, and stigmatization.
- Implement a **monitoring system** for inequalities in access to specialised care (e.g. for patients with cirrhosis).
- Adopt, when possible, **gender-tailored approaches** as women are more vulnerable to stigmatizing attitudes.
- Support health sector planning and review health programmes to **address disparities**.

Community



- Subsidize **community-based prevention efforts** and engage community members in disease prevention: from healthy eating to exercise programmes to anti-stigma interventions.
- Create **low-threshold obesity prevention facilities** that can be used as drop-in centers and referral points for healthcare in disadvantaged areas.
- Adapt **health information to diverse populations** (culturally appropriate, in multiple languages, and with explanations for laypersons) and explore ways to disseminate this information effectively.
- Prevent **stigmatization and discrimination** of people at risk of or living with infectious or chronic digestive diseases using **multilevel interventions** that also involve peers and members of the community.
- Promote the **cultivation of vegetables and fruits** (through local initiatives) and **allocate surpluses** to schools or low-income groups.

Food systems



- Use **taxation** to subsidise health services and increase access to healthy food.
- Regulate **food marketing** and minimise the exposure of children to nutritionally poor food marketing.
- Adopt mandatory, interpretative **front-of-pack nutrition labelling** to provide easy-to-see and easy-to-understand information on the front of food packaging.
- Ensure that **social benefits** in the form of vouchers or in-kind services include healthy foods.

This paper has been produced by United European Gastroenterology (UEG) in January 2024. UEG is a professional non-profit organisation combining all the leading European medical specialists and national societies focusing on digestive health. For more information visit www.ueg.eu.

Resources

1. EASL-Lancet Commission Report (2021) Protecting the next generation of Europeans against liver disease complications and premature mortality ([accessible here](#)).
2. WHO (2021) Guideline on health workforce development, attraction, recruitment and retention in rural and remote areas ([accessible here](#)).
3. European Cancer Organisation (2020) Action Report: It Can Be Done – Beating Inequalities in Cancer Care. ([accessible here](#)).