

**THE SUSTAINABILITY OF
HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS
IN EUROPE**

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**THE SUSTAINABILITY
OF HEALTH CARE
SYSTEMS IN EUROPE**

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution in the structure of society and the economy which occurred over the last decades has created new demands for healthcare services, ultimately putting pressure on policy makers whose concern is primarily related to the sustainability of the health care sector. Policy makers, while waiting for the discovery of effective treatments, are called for action in adjusting to these new demands and improving the organisation of health care and social services delivered to the population. Overall, policy makers understand the need to improve the efficiency of the health care delivery system, as well as tackle the shortage of health professionals, growing health inequalities and inequity to access in healthcare.

The first two contributions of this volume focus on the sustainability of health care systems at the European level. In particular, Guthmuller, Paruolo and Verzillo summarise the role of EU action in supporting health care policies in the EU Member States, emphasising the importance of coordinated actions. Brugiavini and Pasini exploit data from the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe to explore regional- and cohort-level differences in disease prevalence across Europe. The remaining chapters look at the sustainability of national health care systems mainly focussing on a single country, looking in particular at the key features and challenges of national health care systems and discussing recent reforms as well as possible approaches to be implemented in order to improve their financial sustainability. The countries studied are England, Ireland, Norway, Denmark, Poland, The Czech Republic, Austria, France, Spain, Portugal and Italy. Common challenges identified by these studies as contributing to the increase in health care costs are the ageing population, the rising rates in chronic illness, as well as supply side issues such as labour costs and rising prices for pharmaceutical products, therapies and new technologies. The chapters in this volume examine recent reforms as well as identify possible interventions targeting these issues, with the aim to make health care more financially sustainable. Finally, most of the chapters in this volume also discuss the implications and challenges induced by the COVID-19 pandemic on the national health care systems.