

Building primary care in a changing Europe

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Observatory
Studies Series

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For many citizens primary care is the first point of contact with their health care system, where most of their health needs are satisfied but also acting as the gate to the rest of the system. In that respect primary care plays a crucial role in how patients value health systems as responsive to their needs and expectations.

This volume analyses the way how primary care is organised and delivered across European countries, looking at governance, financing and workforce aspects and the breadth of the service profiles. It describes wide national variations in terms of accessibility, continuity and coordination. Relating these differences to health system outcomes the authors suggest some priority areas for reducing the gap between the ideal and current realities.

The study also reviews the growing evidence on the added value of strong primary care for the performance of the health system overall and explores how primary care is challenged by emerging financial constraints, changing health threats and morbidity, workforce developments and the growing possibilities of technology.

In a second, companion volume, that is available on-line, structured summaries of the state of primary care in 31 European countries are presented. These summaries explain the context of primary care in each country; governance and economic conditions; the development of the primary care workforce; how primary care services are delivered; and the quality and efficiency of the primary care system.

This book builds on the EU-funded project 'Primary Health Care Activity Monitor for Europe' (PHAMEU) that was led by the Netherlands Institute for Health Services Research (NIVEL) and co-funded by the European Commission (Directorate General Health & Consumers).