

Policy Paper

Title: Enhancing the Resilience of Health Care Systems: A Strategic Framework for Latvia and the Baltic States

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Executive Summary

This policy paper presents a strategic framework to strengthen the resilience and sustainability of the health care system in Latvia and the broader Baltic region. It highlights systemic vulnerabilities, particularly in medicine supply chains, primary health care, and disaster preparedness. A newly established non-governmental organization (NGO) now serves as a thematic think tank, promoting intersectoral collaboration, knowledge transfer, and integration of the health care sector into national security strategies. Key recommendations include the development of strategic reserves, enhanced cross-sector coordination, and embedding health care within broader crisis preparedness frameworks.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic and heightened geopolitical instability have underscored the urgency of reinforcing health care system resilience. Core services—such as primary health care, diagnostics, infection control, pharmaceutical care, and uninterrupted medicine supply—must remain operational in times of crisis. Recognizing health as a pillar of national defense, this paper outlines comprehensive, forward-thinking solutions to safeguard public health and ensure service continuity during emergencies.

This position is supported by a growing body of literature. Kruk et al. (2015) describe resilience as the capacity of health systems to absorb shocks and maintain core functions. The OECD (2021) emphasizes robust governance and reliable supply chains. Thomas et al. (2020) advocate for resilience as a foundational element of sustainable

development. Blanchet et al. (2017) stress the importance of systems thinking and stable financing. These perspectives underpin the urgent call for structural reforms outlined in this paper.

2. Current Context and Challenges

Latvia possesses a well-developed pharmaceutical sector capable of producing essential medications for the Baltic region. Nevertheless, vulnerabilities persist due to global supply chain dependencies, fluctuating international markets, and limited domestic reserves.

Key challenges include:

- Fragile and globally dependent medicine supply chains.
- Limited strategic reserves of essential pharmaceuticals.
- Weak coordination between sectors and limited regional integration.
- Inadequate incorporation of health resilience into national security planning.

OECD studies emphasize the need for multilateral collaboration and public-private partnerships to bolster resilience. The European Medicines Agency (2022) calls for cohesive regulatory strategies, while the Global Health Security Index (2021) exposes significant disparities in health crisis preparedness among nations.

3. Strategic Objectives

Goal: To ensure a sustainable, people-centered, and integrated health care system capable of withstanding crises.

Objectives:

- Strengthen the resilience of health care and pharmaceutical infrastructure.
- Integrate health security into national and regional defense strategies.
- Promote collaboration among government bodies, academia, civil society, and the private sector.
- Foster civic engagement and expert input in health resilience policymaking.

4. Proposed Solution: Establishment of a Thematic Think Tank

To drive implementation, a dedicated NGO has been established as a thematic think tank for health care system resilience. The think tank's mission includes:

- Engaging multidisciplinary experts from health, security, economics, and human rights.
- Partnering with academic institutions, civil society, and industry.
- Organizing public forums, policy discussions, and international conferences.
- Producing toolkits, crisis management training modules, and continuity planning guides.

These activities align with the WHO's (2020) emphasis on coordinated preparedness and evidence-based planning. Hanefeld et al. (2018) highlight the role of adaptive leadership and robust networks in guiding systems through shocks, further validating this approach.

5. Implementation Strategy

Tactics:

- Establish regional and international partnerships.
- Initiate interdisciplinary research and policy innovation.
- Develop and disseminate training programs.
- Maintain transparency and engage stakeholders continuously.

Timeline:

- Q1–Q2: Form governance structures and onboard key partners.
- Q3–Q4: Launch pilot initiatives and publish inaugural findings.
- Year 2: Expand networks and institutionalize activities across the Baltic region.

6. Conclusion

Latvia and the Baltic States must embrace a unified, forward-looking approach to health care resilience. A crucial step has already been taken with the formation of a dedicated think tank that facilitates collaboration, drives research, and strengthens medicine supply chain integrity.

The Niinistö report, a 2024 European Commission initiative led by President Sauli Niinistö, presents a comprehensive blueprint for enhancing Europe's preparedness by integrating civilian and military crisis readiness. Its conclusions highlight the need for strategic stockpiles, improved coordination, crisis communication capabilities, and dual-use infrastructure. These insights reinforce the relevance of embedding health resilience within broader security architectures and support the strategic direction proposed in this paper.

This initiative sets a foundation for a resilient, adaptive, and secure health care system—one that positions the Baltic region as a leader in integrated crisis response. By treating health care as a security priority, this policy framework aims to inspire coordinated, sustainable preparedness at national and regional levels.

Appendices:

Appendix A: OECD Recommendations Summary

- Enhance the robustness and transparency of medicine supply chains.
- Strengthen primary health care and public health infrastructure.
- Expand intersectoral coordination and governance.
- Promote investments in preparedness and emergency response capacity.

Appendix B: Risk Assessment of Current Medicine Supply Chains

- High dependency on foreign manufacturers.
- Limited stockpiling and redundancy in national distribution networks.
- Vulnerability to geopolitical shocks and pandemics.
- Weak integration of health logistics in emergency planning.

Appendix C: Proposed Organizational Structure of the Think Tank

- Board of Directors: Strategic oversight and international coordination.
- Executive Team: Day-to-day management and stakeholder relations.
- Research Division: Policy analysis, scenario planning, and publication.
- Training & Outreach Unit: Educational programs, events, and civic engagement.
- Partnerships & Communications Unit: Media, partnerships, and public affairs.

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