

Health systems resilience during COVID-19: Lessons for building back better

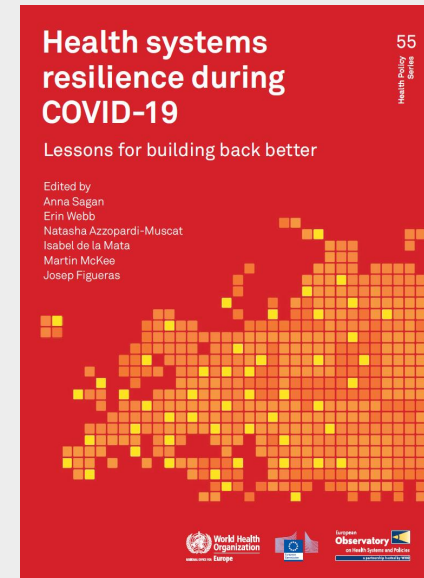
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On behalf of the author and editor team

16th November 2021

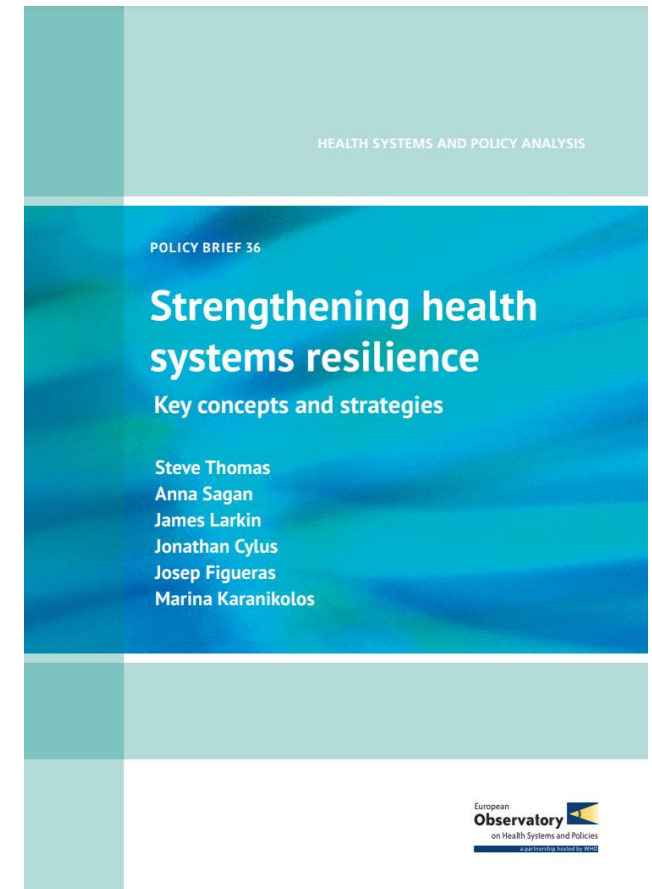




What is health systems resilience?

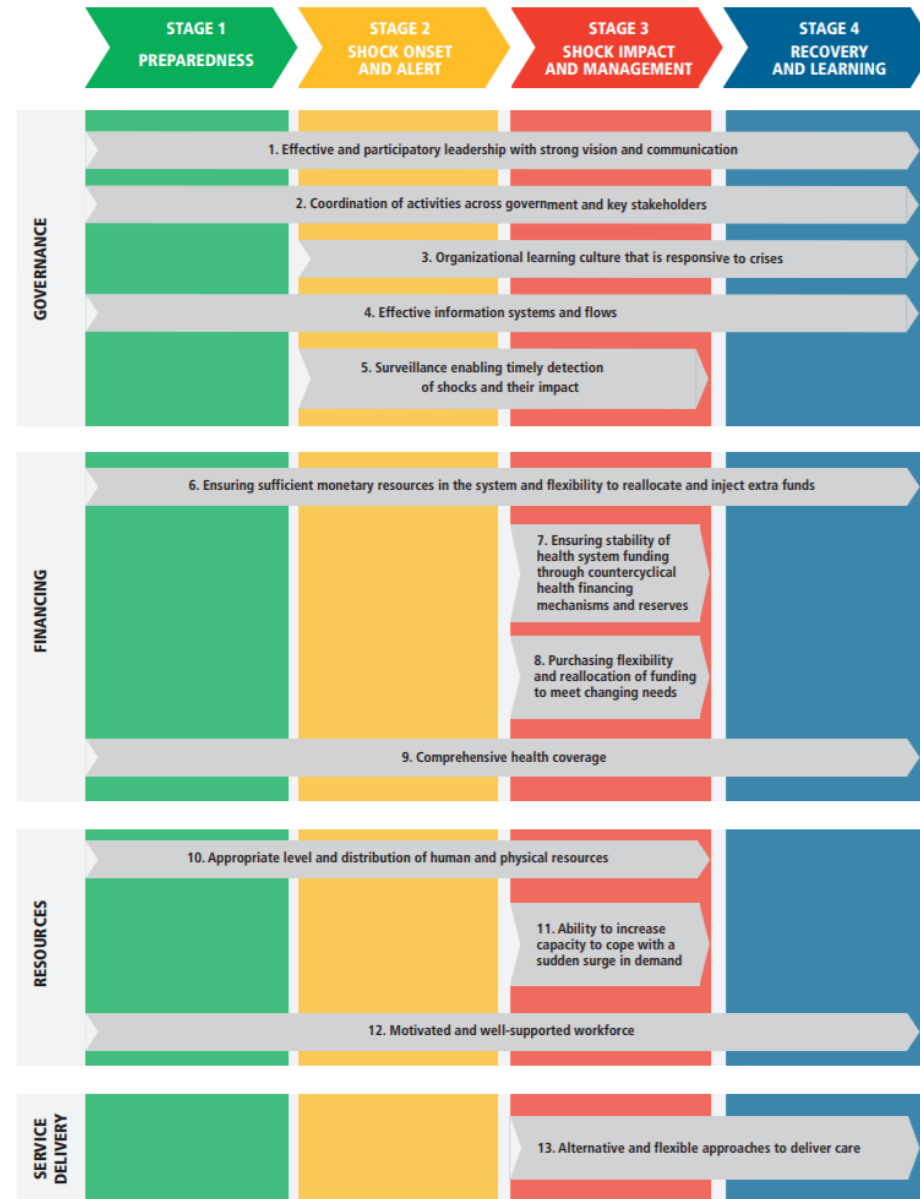


Resilience as the *ability* of health systems to prepare for, manage (adapt, absorb, transform) and learn from shocks





13 key strategies for a resilient response to shocks





20 key strategies for a resilient response to COVID-19

LEADING AND GOVERNING THE COVID-19 RESPONSE

- Strategy 1 Steering the response through effective political leadership
- Strategy 2 Delivering a clear and timely COVID-19 response strategy
- Strategy 3 Strengthening monitoring, surveillance and early warning systems
- Strategy 4 Transferring the best available evidence from research to policy
- Strategy 5 Coordinating effectively within (horizontally) and across (vertically) levels of government
- Strategy 6 Ensuring transparency, legitimacy and accountability
- Strategy 7 Communicating clearly and transparently with the population and stakeholders
- Strategy 8 Involving nongovernmental stakeholders including the health workforce, civil society and communities
- Strategy 9 Coordinating the COVID-19 response beyond national borders

FINANCING COVID-19 SERVICES

- Strategy 10 Ensuring sufficient and stable funds to meet needs
- Strategy 11 Adapting purchasing, procurement and payment systems to meet changing needs and balance economic incentives
- Strategy 12 Supporting universal health coverage and reducing barriers to services

MOBILIZING AND SUPPORTING THE HEALTH WORKFORCE

- Strategy 13 Ensuring an adequate health workforce by scaling-up existing capacity and recruiting additional health workers
- Strategy 14 Implementing flexible and effective approaches to using the workforce
- Strategy 15 Ensuring physical, mental health and financial support for health workers

STRENGTHENING PUBLIC HEALTH INTERVENTIONS

- Strategy 16 Implementing appropriate nonpharmaceutical interventions and Find, Test, Trace, Isolate and Support (FTTIS) services to control transmission
- Strategy 17 Implementing effective COVID-19 vaccination programmes
- Strategy 18 Maintaining routine public health services

TRANSFORMING DELIVERY OF HEALTH SERVICES TO ADDRESS COVID-19 AND OTHER NEEDS

- Strategy 19 Scaling-up, repurposing and (re)distributing existing capacity to cope with sudden surges in COVID-19 demand
- Strategy 20 Adapting or transforming service delivery by implementing alternative and flexible patient care pathways and interventions and recognizing the key role of primary health care

Health systems resilience during COVID-19

Lessons for building back better

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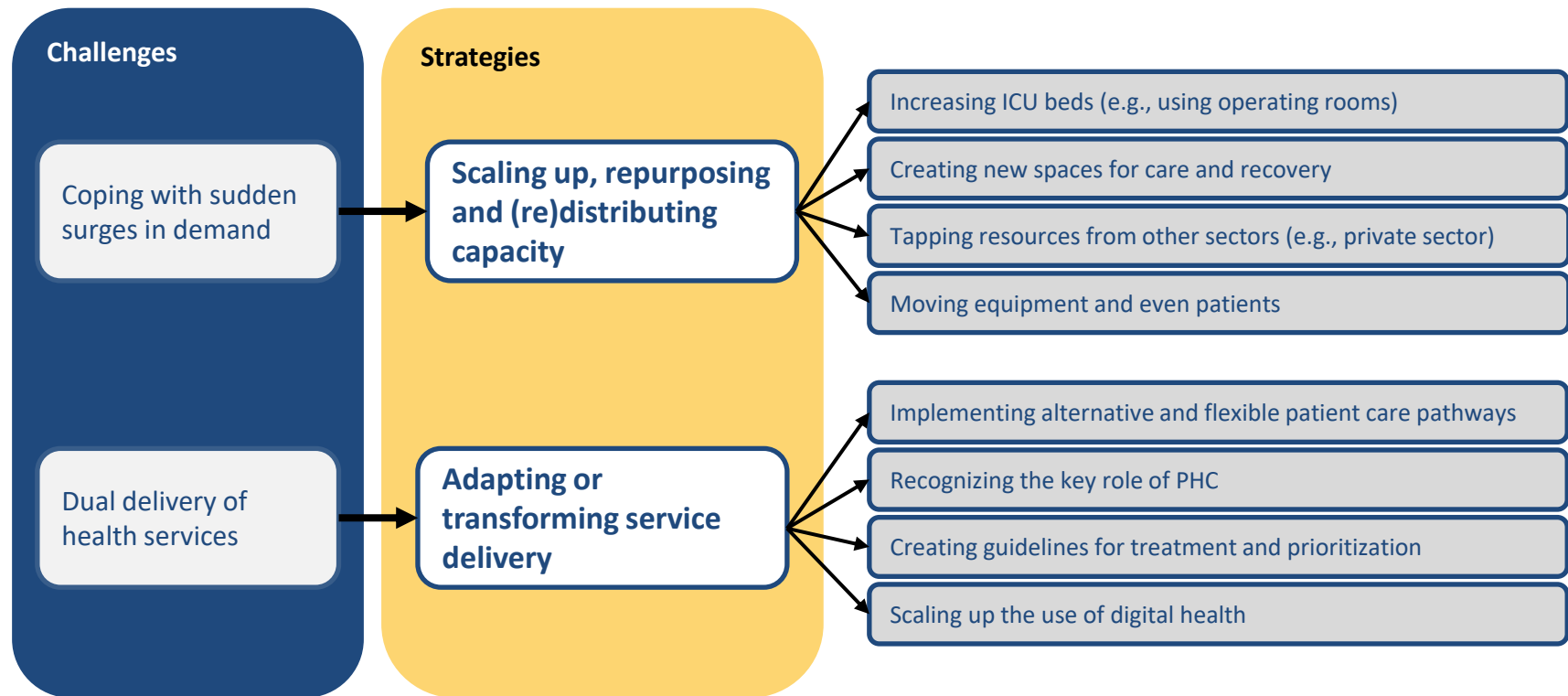


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Health Policy Series



Challenges & responses in service delivery

LEADING AND GOVERNING THE COVID-19 RESPONSE	
Strategy 1	Identifying a clear and timely COVID-19 response strategy
Strategy 2	Strengthening surveillance, analytics and early warning systems
Strategy 3	Streamlining the health system response from research to practice
Strategy 4	Coordinating efficiency, equity and accountability and across national levels of government
Strategy 5	Ensuring transparency, evidence and accountability
Strategy 6	Communicating plans and transparently with the population and stakeholders
Strategy 7	Enabling intergovernmental relationships including the health system, and social and community
Strategy 8	Coordinating the COVID-19 response across stakeholders
FINANCING COVID-19 SERVICES	
Strategy 9	Ensuring sufficient and timely health care financing
Strategy 10	Addressing financing, procurement and payment systems to meet changing needs and balance economic incentives
Strategy 11	Supporting universal health coverage and reducing barriers to service
BUILDING AND SUPPORTING THE HEALTH WORKFORCE	
Strategy 12	Ensuring an adequate health workforce by nurturing existing capacity and recruiting additional health workers
Strategy 13	Improving health and health systems performance through the workforce
Strategy 14	Ensuring physical, mental health and financial support for health workers
STRENGTHENING PUBLIC HEALTH INTERVENTIONS	
Strategy 15	Supporting evidence-based implementation of transmission and Post-Test, Triage, Triage and Support (PTTS) services to control or mitigate transmission
Strategy 16	Supporting effective COVID-19 vaccination programmes
MANAGING INCIDENT OR HEALTH SERVICES TO ADDRESS COVID-19 AND OTHER NEEDS	
Strategy 17	Ensuring appropriate and equitable health services to cope with future waves of COVID-19 demand
Strategy 18	Addressing a wide range of health services to support patient care pathways and interventions and managing the health system



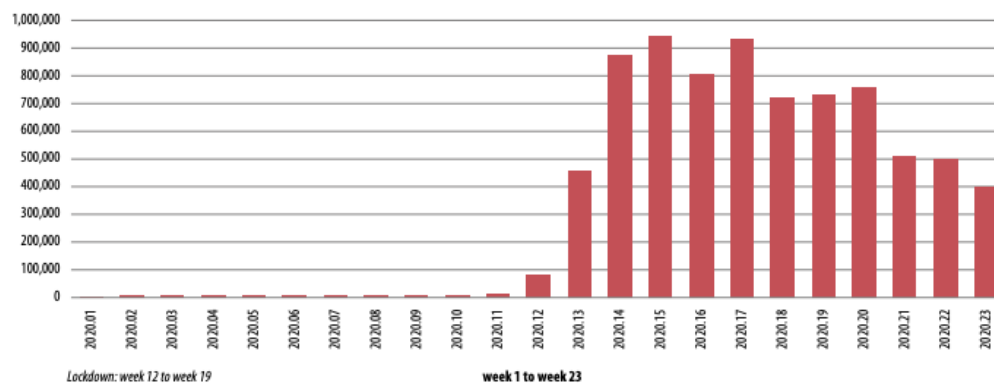


An illustration: scaling up digital health

Digital health tools have been used during the pandemic to support four main areas:

- communication and information, including tackling misinformation
- surveillance and monitoring
- continuing provision of health care such as through remote consultations
- rollout and monitoring of vaccination programmes

Figure 1: Number of teleconsultations in France, 2020 (Week 1 to Week 23)



Source: CNAM





Essential role of public health in controlling transmission and protecting specialist care from being overwhelmed

LEADING AND GOVERNING THE COVID-19 RESPONSE	
Strategy 1	Identifying a clear and timely COVID-19 response strategy
Strategy 2	Strengthening surveillance, analytics and early warning systems
Strategy 3	Formulating the best evidence evidence-based response to control
Strategy 4	Coordinating activities across different levels of government
Strategy 5	Ensuring transparency, evidence and accountability
Strategy 6	Communicating clearly and transparently with the population and stakeholders
Strategy 7	Ensuring transparent governance involving the health workforce, and patients and communities
Strategy 8	Coordinating the COVID-19 response across member states

FINANCING COVID-19 SERVICES	
Strategy 9	Ensuring sufficient and timely funds to meet needs
Strategy 10	Addressing financing, procurement and payment systems to meet changing needs and balance economic incentives
Strategy 11	Supporting national health financing and reducing barriers to service

PROTECTING AND SUPPORTING THE HEALTH WORKFORCE	
Strategy 12	Ensuring an adequate health workforce by managing existing capacity and recruiting additional health workers
Strategy 13	Enhancing resilience and flexible approaches to using the workforce

STRENGTHENING PUBLIC HEALTH INTERVENTIONS	
Strategy 14	Supporting national implementation of interventions and Post-Test, Trace, Isolate and Support (FTTIS) services to control or mitigate transmission
Strategy 15	Supporting effective COVID-19 vaccination programmes
Strategy 16	Maintaining routine public health services

SUPPORTING SPECIALIST CARE	
Strategy 17	Ensuring responding and maintaining existing capacity to care with higher levels of COVID-19 demand
Strategy 18	Addressing an increasing service demand by reorganising specialist and broader patient care pathways and structures and recognising the role of primary health care

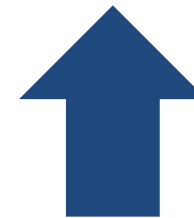
Reducing transmission



- Non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs)
- Find, Test, Trace, Isolate, Support (FTTIS)
- COVID-19 Vaccination

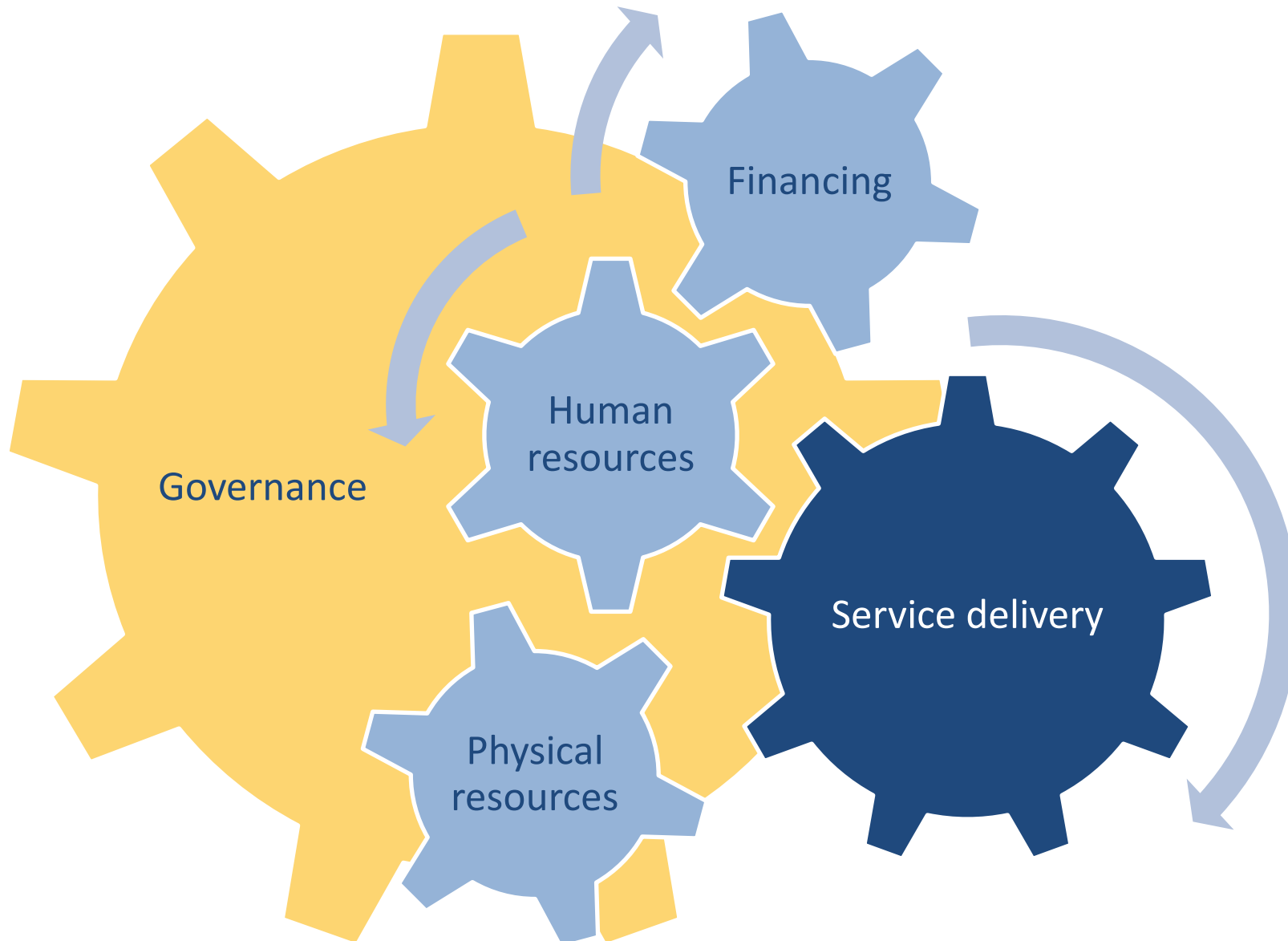
- Routine vaccination
- Screening
- Check-ups

Maintaining preventive services





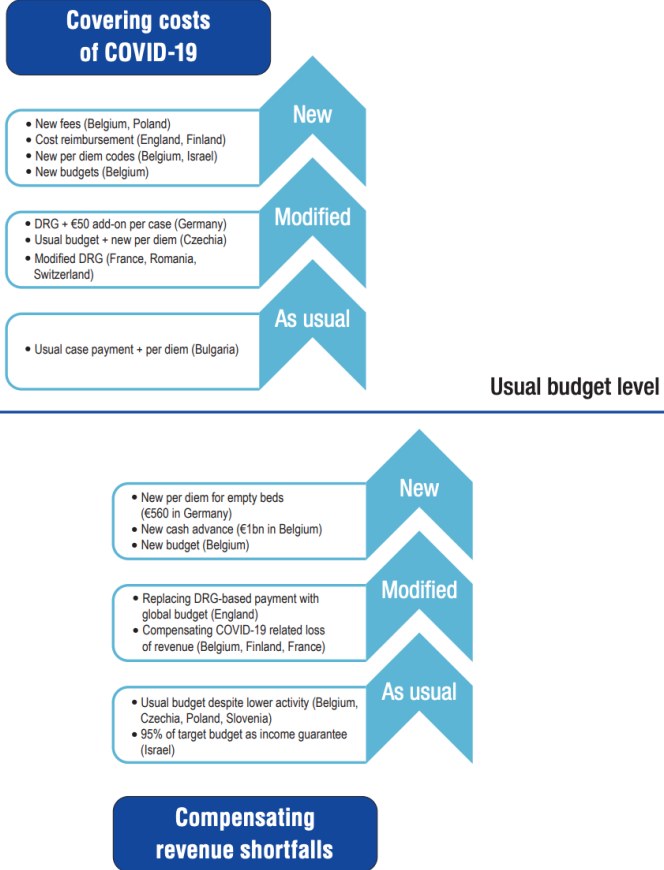
Ensuring dual delivery of services requires adapting resources and effective governance



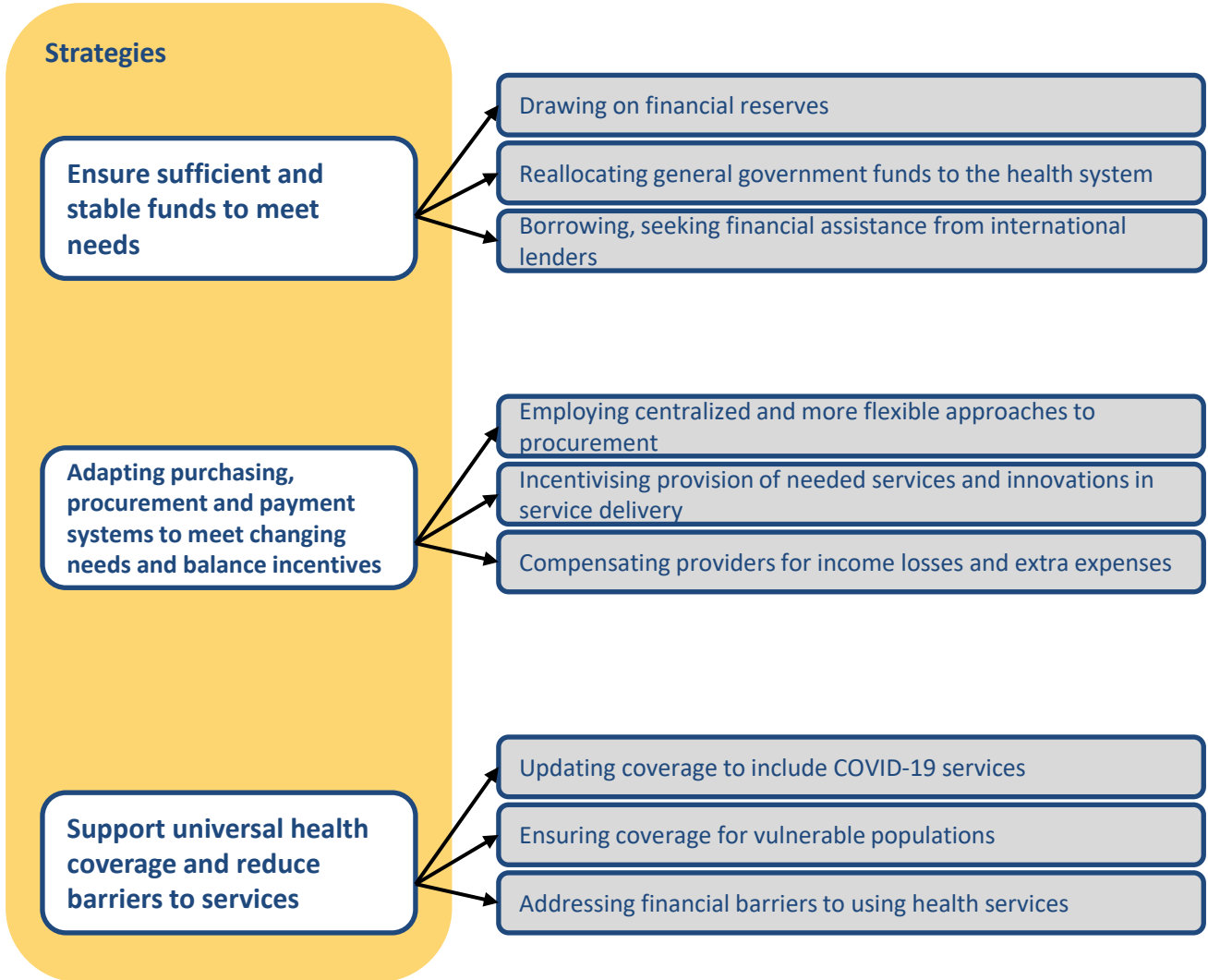


Financing had to be increased and adjusted

FINANCING AND GOVERNANCE OF THE COVID-19 RESPONSE	
Strategy 10	Revising the response through effective public financing
Strategy 11	Identifying a clear and timely COVID-19 response strategy
Strategy 12	Strengthening monitoring, evaluation and early warning systems
Strategy 13	Streamlining the health insurance system towards a single system
Strategy 14	Coordinating efficiency, equity, accountability and access activities across all levels of government
Strategy 15	Revising financing, governance and accountability
Strategy 16	Communicating plans and investments with the population and stakeholders
Strategy 17	Protecting governmental stakeholders including the health system, not-profits and communities
Strategy 18	Establishing a COVID-19 response financing framework
FINANCING COVID-19 SERVICES	
Strategy 19	Revising national and sub-national health financing
Strategy 20	Addressing purchasing, procurement and payment systems to meet changing needs and balance economic incentives
Strategy 21	Addressing financial health financing and equity barriers to service
FINANCING COVID-19 SERVICES TO ADDRESS COVID-19 HEALTH CARE NEEDS	
Strategy 22	Ensuring an adequate health workforce by nurturing existing capacity and involving additional health workers
Strategy 23	Improving the use of health services to reduce the burden
Strategy 24	Ensuring physical, mental health and financial support for health workers
FINANCING PUBLIC HEALTH INTERVENTIONS	
Strategy 25	Supporting national and international surveillance and Public Health, Safety and Support (PSS) services to control or mitigate transmission
Strategy 26	Supporting public health services
FINANCING GOVERNANCE OF HEALTH SERVICES TO ADDRESS COVID-19 HEALTH CARE NEEDS	
Strategy 27	Ensuring appropriate and sustainable health services to cope with future waves of COVID-19 demand
Strategy 28	Addressing financing service delivery by reorganizing structures and health care pathways and strengthening and recognizing the role of primary health care



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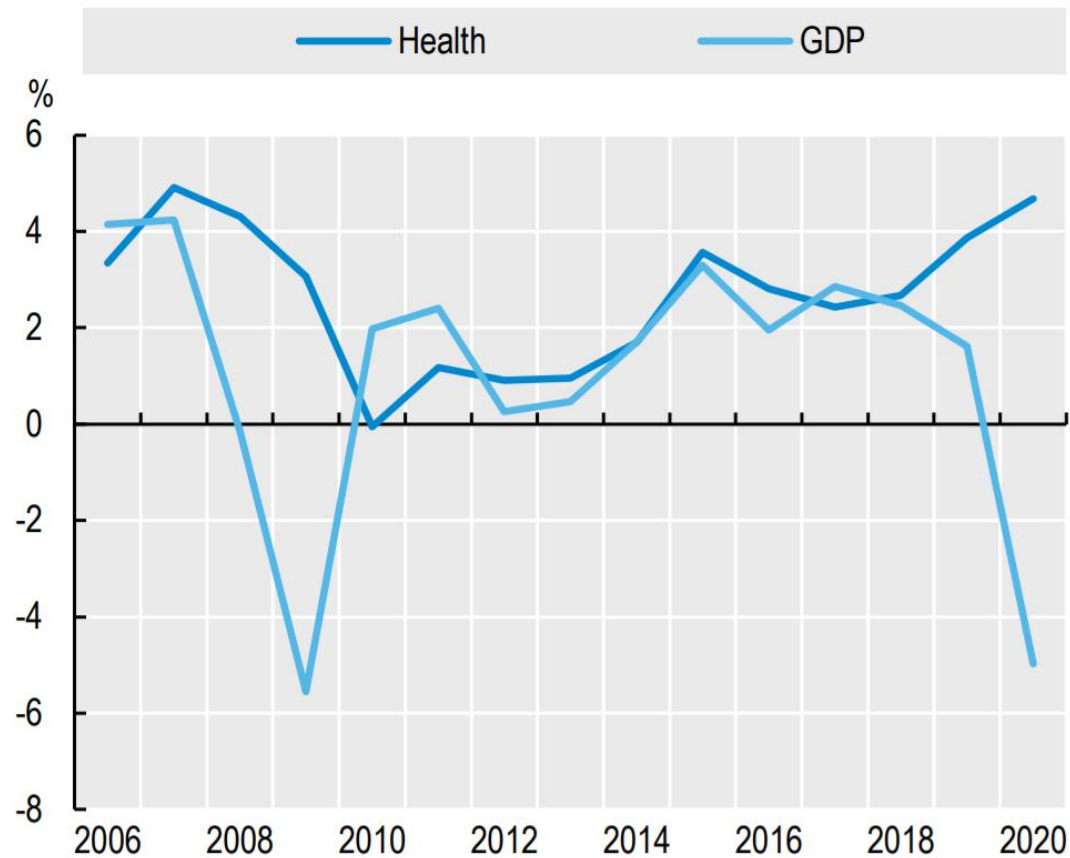
DRG: diagnosis-related group.

Source: Quentin et al. (2020).



We saw a strong increase in per capita spending on health in 2020

Annual real growth in per capita health expenditure and GDP, OECD, 2005-2020



Note: Average of 22 OECD countries.
Source: OECD Health Statistics 2021.



Human resources had to be increased in numbers, reskilled and supported

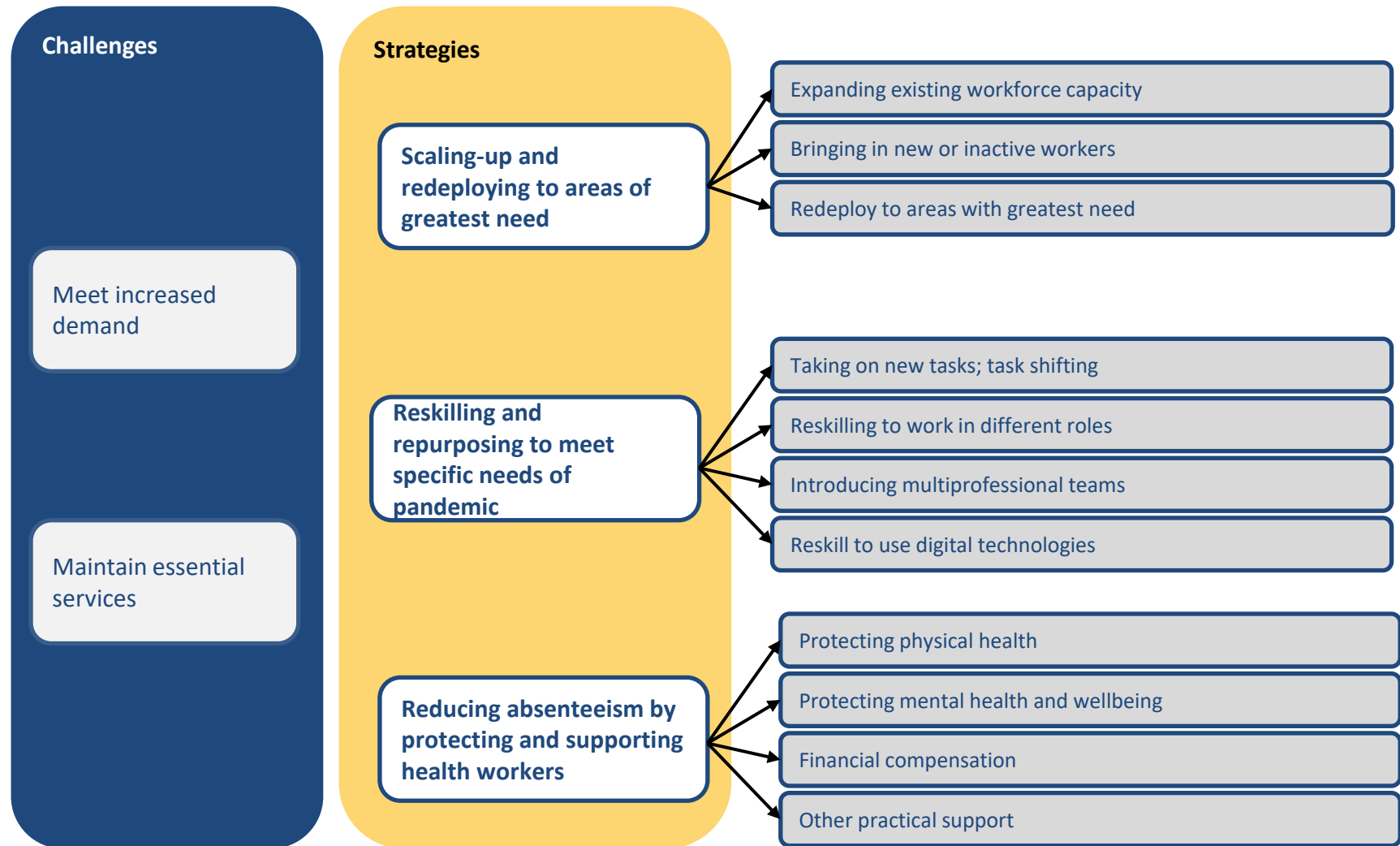
LEADING AND GOVERNING THE COVID-19 RESPONSE	
Strategy 1	Ensuring the response through effective central coordination
Strategy 2	Identifying a clear and timely COVID-19 response strategy
Strategy 3	Strengthening systems, structures and staff management
Strategy 4	Formulating the best evidence evidence for decision making
Strategy 5	Coordinating efficiency, safety, accountability and access (national, state or government)
Strategy 6	Ensuring transparency, evidence and accountability
Strategy 7	Communicating plans and arrangements with the population and stakeholders
Strategy 8	Ensuring transparent relationships (including the health workforce, and patients and communities)
Strategy 9	Coordinating the COVID-19 response across stakeholders

FINANCING COVID-19 SERVICES	
Strategy 10	Ensuring sufficient and timely health financing
Strategy 11	Addressing financing, procurement and payment systems to meet changing needs and balance economic incentives

HEALTHCARE AND SUPPORTING THE HEALTH WORKFORCE	
Strategy 12	Ensuring an adequate health workforce by managing existing capacity and recruiting additional health workers
Strategy 13	Ensuring the skills and effective operation of existing health workers
Strategy 14	Ensuring practical, essential health workforce support for health workers

ENHANCING PUBLIC HEALTH AND PREVENTION	
Strategy 15	Supporting evidence-based implementation of prevention and Public Health, Tackling and Support (PTTS) services to control or mitigate transmission
Strategy 16	Supporting public health services

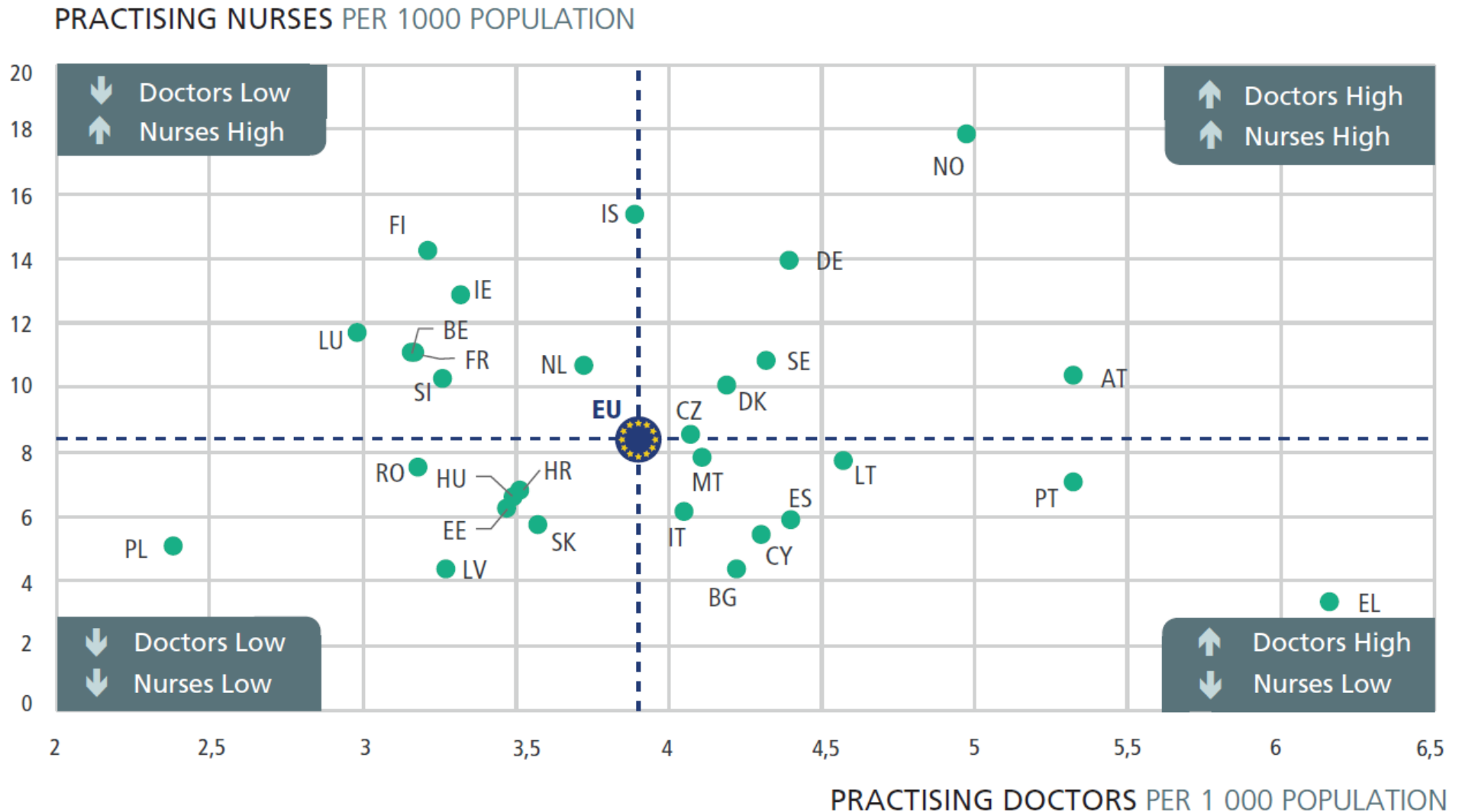
REAUTHORIZING GOVERNMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES TO ADDRESS COVID-19 AND OTHER NEEDS	
Strategy 17	Enabling government and non-governmental entities to work with health workers in COVID-19 control
Strategy 18	Addressing a health emergency service delivery by reorganizing attention and health care pathways and structures and recognizing the role of primary health care





There is a large variation in the numbers of practicing doctors and nurses

Doctors vs nurses, 2019





Leadership and governance were essential to an effective response

Strategy	Key Messages
Strategy 1	Steering the response through effective political leadership
Strategy 2	Delivering a clear and timely COVID-19 response strategy
Strategy 3	Strengthening monitoring, surveillance and early warning systems
Strategy 4	Transferring the best available evidence from research to policy
Strategy 5	Coordinating effectively within (horizontally) and across (vertically) levels of government
Strategy 6	Ensuring transparency, legitimacy and accountability
Strategy 7	Communicating clearly and transparently with the population and stakeholders
Strategy 8	Involving non-governmental stakeholders including the health workforce, civil society and communities
Strategy 9	Coordinating the COVID-19 response beyond the national borders

1. Steering the response through effective **political leadership**

2. Delivering a clear and timely COVID-19 **response strategy**

3. Strengthening monitoring, surveillance, and **early warning systems**

4. Transferring the best available **evidence from research and policy**

5. **Coordinating effectively** within (horizontally) and across (vertically) levels of government

6. Ensuring **transparency, legitimacy and accountability**

7. **Communicating** clearly and transparently with the population and relevant stakeholders

8. Involving non-governmental **stakeholders** including the health workforce, civil society, and communities

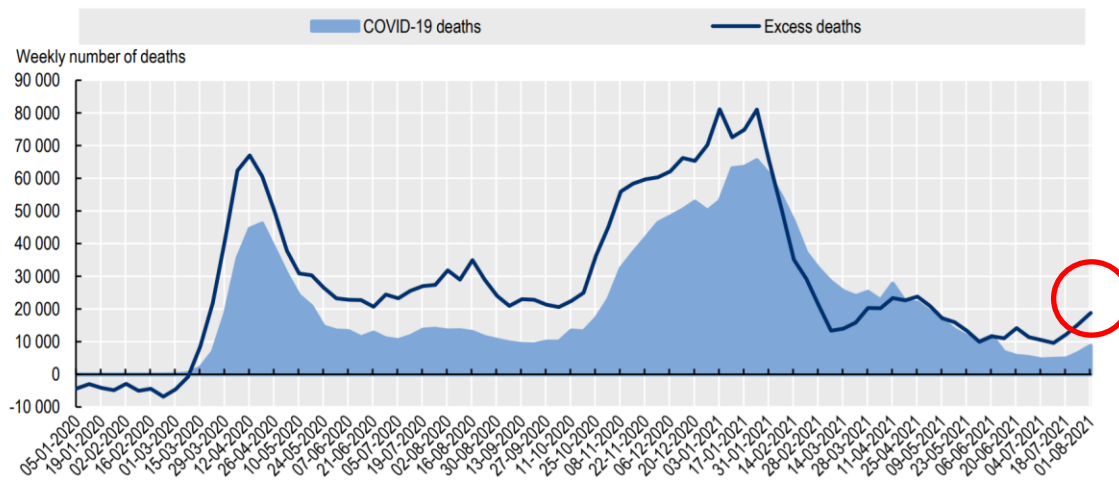
9. **Coordinating** the COVID-19 response beyond the national borders



What next?

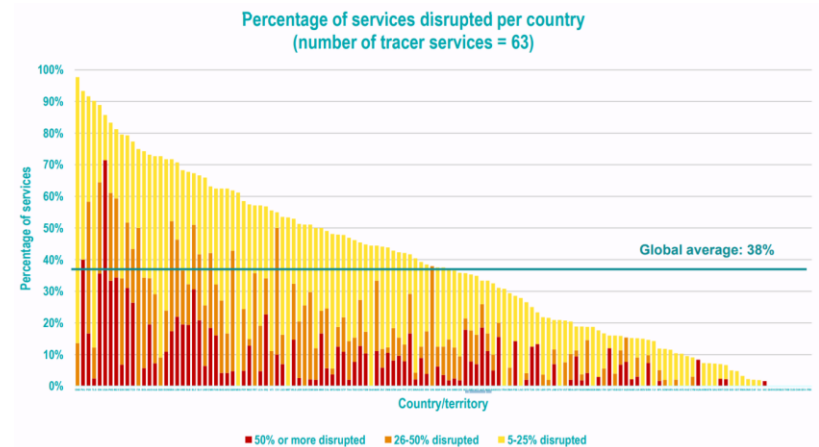
A looming 'tsunami' of non-COVID patients?

Weekly COVID-19 deaths compared to weekly excess deaths in 30 OECD countries, January 2020 to early August 2021



Note: Data exclude Australia, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ireland, Japan, Korea, and Turkey.
Source: OECD (2021[30]), OECD Health Statistics, <https://doi.org/10.1787/health-data-en>.

On average, countries reported disruptions to more than one third of services



Source: WHO's National pulse survey on continuity of essential health services during the COVID-19 pandemic, 2021



What next?

A 'silent pandemic'?

INTERVIEW

WHO: Covid will be a 'dual pandemic' - physical and mental



The pandemic has been associated with a sharp increase in requests to mental health services (Photo: [Koen Jacobs](#))

By [ELENA SÁNCHEZ NICOLÁS](#)  

BRUSSELS, 1. OCT, 07:05

Source: EU Observer

“Up to one-in-two young people between 18 and 29 are currently suffering depression or anxiety. That is also the case for one-out-of-five frontline workers, such as doctors and nurses.”

Natasha Azzopardi-Muscat



Where next? Improving responses to COVID-19

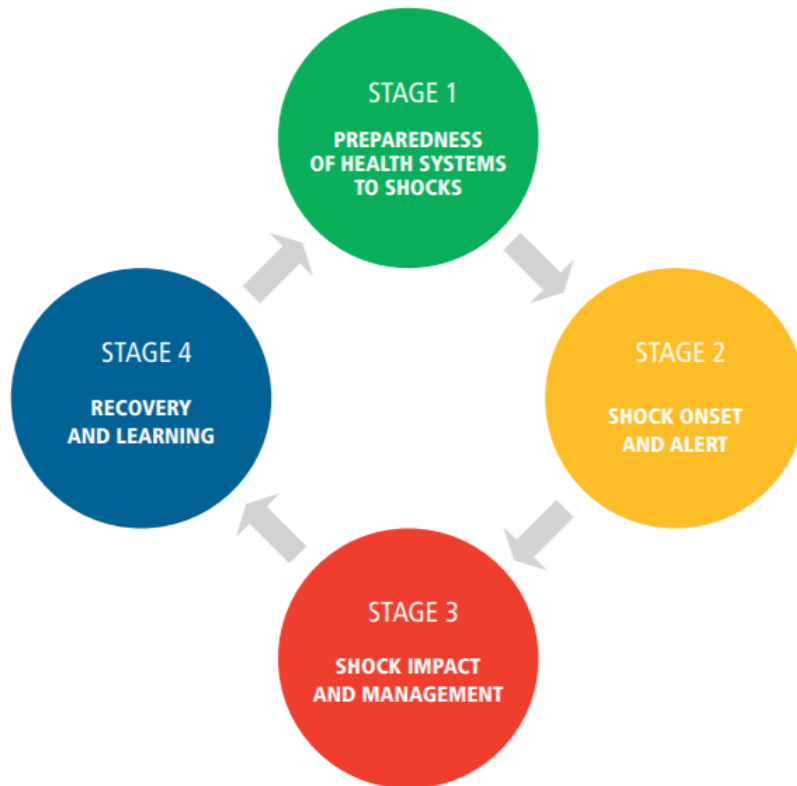
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Possible assessment areas:

- Availability of non-COVID services (diagnostics, primary and specialist care, emergency care, mental health services, rehabilitation, etc); change in health services utilisation, waiting times, bed occupancy, unmet need, etc.
- Availability of essential medicines
- Maintaining quality standards across all services
- Ability to provide of health services remotely
- Ensuring provision of services for at-risk population groups
- Monitoring of access to services (e.g. utilisation, waiting times, unmet need; equity of access)



Where next? Preparing for future shocks



Targeted investment in health systems is needed, including in:

- Strengthening public health, primary health care and human resources
 - Making service provision more flexible
 - Well-functioning monitoring, surveillance, and early warning systems
 - Health systems governance
 - meaningful multi-sectoral coordination
- **All this requires not only political will but also active political leadership and prioritizing health**



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