

**Analysis of social determinants of health and health inequities
- a multi country event on approaches and policy
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Abstracts of key-note lectures

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Social inequalities in Central and Eastern Europe in the period of societal transformation

The health status of populations of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union underwent major changes after the fall of communism. While mortality started declining in Central Europe, mortality rates in Russia and most other countries of the former Soviet Union rose dramatically and have yet to improve. Fertility, to give another example, declined to lowest-low levels, mainly due to stopping / postponing second births. In terms of socioeconomic changes, some countries, mainly in Central Europe, were able to contain the fall in income and rise in income inequalities but across the former Soviet Union gross domestic product plummeted and income inequalities grew rapidly. This has led to two types of inequality: first, the widening gap in health between countries, and second, the increasing social gradients in health within countries. The exact pathways are not entirely clear but available evidence confirms the importance of both psychosocial mechanism and health behaviours (e.g. excessive alcohol intake).