



ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Health literacy makes a fundamentally important contribution to safeguarding the human rights principle of equitable access to healthcare, especially when existing healthcare resources are less accessible to certain populations due to their circumstances.

Improving the health literacy of people and systems has the potential to improve the safety and quality of health care, reduce disparities in health outcomes thereby promoting more prosperous and equitable societies. It is an asset for healthcare, disease prevention and health promotion. It generates a return on social and economic investments which helps to save time, costs, and lives.

The Steering Committee for Human Rights in the fields of Biomedicine and Health (CDBIO) invites member states to strengthen and develop their health literacy efforts - with a view to securing equity in accessing healthcare and decreasing health disparities - in particular by:

- ▶ supporting users of health systems, including their caregivers and representatives of associations, to access valid health information and appropriate care, as well as to actively participate in shared decision making with health professionals and health authorities regarding treatment and care;
- ▶ promoting access to digital spaces to understand and thereby to use health services, so that individuals may fully benefit from them;
- ▶ mobilising policy makers and health authorities to advance health literacy in collaboration with non-state stakeholders, such as academia, industry, and NGOs;
- ▶ conducting health literacy needs assessments at various levels. Decision-makers and health providers are encouraged to deploy an evidence-based approach to health literacy;
- ▶ increasing health literacy capacity, such as in the design of health systems, workforce and leadership training and education, awareness raising of health literacy as a job opportunity and requirement, and the development of health literacy as a professional skill.