From 'international' to 'global' health

Main implications for European countries

Lies Steurs, Centre for EU Studies, Department of Polical Sciences, Ghent University

IJHPM
International Journal of Health Policy and Management

Original Article

The Global Health Policies of the EU and its Member States: A Common Vision?

Lies Steurs[1], Remco Van de Pas[2,3,4*], Sarah Delputte[1], Jan Orbie[1]

Abstract
Background: This article assesses the global health policies of the European Union (EU) and those of its individual member states. So far EU and public health scholars have paid little heed to this, despite the large budgets involved in this area. While the European Commission has attempted to define the 'EU role in Global Health' in 2010, member states are active in the domain of global health as well. Therefore, this article raises the question to what extent a common 'EU' vision on global health exists.

Methods: This is examined through a comparative framing analysis of the global health policy documents of the European Commission and five EU member states (France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Belgium, and Denmark). The analysis is informed by a two-layered typology, distinguishing *global health* from *international health* and four 'global health frames,' namely *social justice, security, investment* and *charity*.

Results: The findings show that the concept of 'global health' has not gained ground the same way within European policy documents. Consequently, there are also differences in how health is being framed. While the European Commission, Belgium, and Denmark clearly support a social justice frame, the global health strategies of the United Kingdom, Germany, and France put an additional focus on the security and investment frames.

Conclusion: There are different understandings of global/international health as well as different framings within relevant documents of the EU and its member states. Therefore, the existence of an 'EU' vision on global health is questionable. Further research is needed on how this impacts on policy implementation.

Keywords: European Union (EU), Global Health, Framing, Development Cooperation, Foreign Policy

Definitions Global Health

"Global health refers to health issues that transcend national boundaries and governments and call for actions on the global forces that determine the health of people." (Kickbusch, 2006)
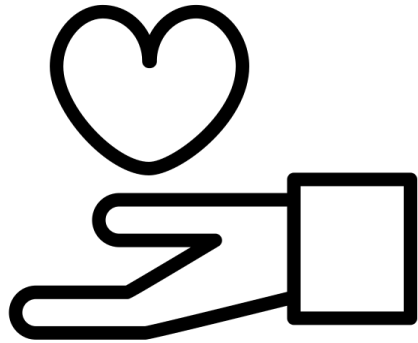
"Global health is an area for study, research, and practice that places a priority on improving health and achieving equity in health for all people worldwide." (Koplan, 2009)
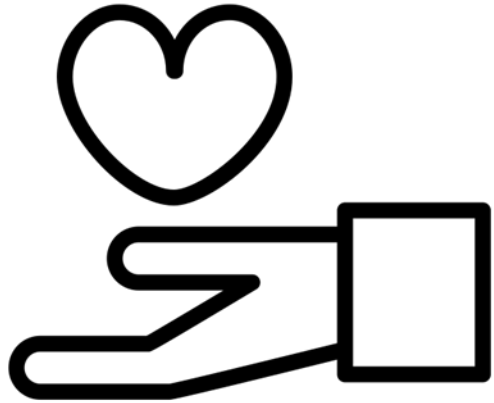
Shift international health towards global health:

	International health	Global health
Scope	Assisting developing countries in fighting infectious and neglected tropical diseases	Focusing on the health impacts of deepened globalization for all countries (also industrialized countries)
Policy actors	Ministry of development cooperation	'Whole-of-a-government' approach

Global health frames

Charity

- Fight absolute poverty
- Altruism among states
- Ad-hoc, unpredictable
- Focus on popular themes of victimhood & emergencies

Social justice

Created by Diego Naive
from Noun Project

- Realizing health as a human right
- Moral commitment to solidarity between individuals
- Long-term engagement
- Focus on basic health care and strengthening the health system

Security

- Fighting infectious diseases and contribute to social and political stability
- Self-interest of Western states
- Long-term engagement
- Often disease-specific focus

Investment

- Health as a means of maximizing economic development
- Self-interest of Western States
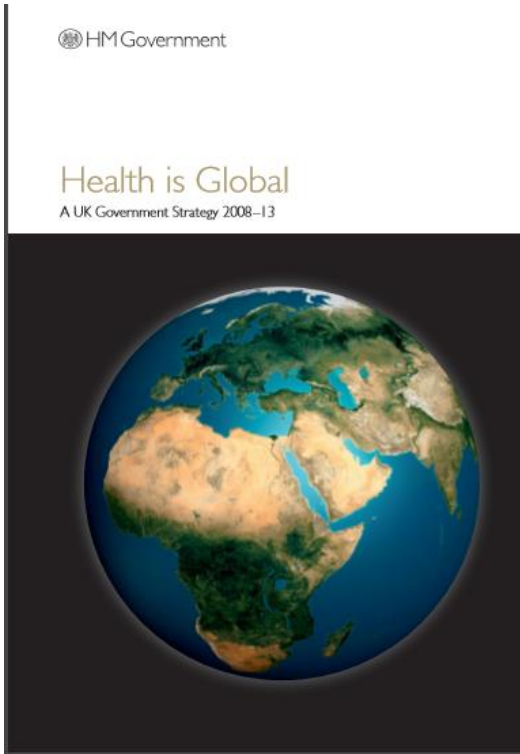- Long-term commitment
- Disease-specific

International health

Global Health

Charity	Social Justice	Security	Investment
Fight absolute poverty	Realizing health as a human right	Fighting infectious diseases and contribute to social and political stability	Maximize economic development
Atruism among states	Moral commitment to solidarity between individuals	Self-interest of Western states	Sel-interest of Western States
Voluntary, termporary and unpredictable	Long-term	Long-term	Long-term
Focus on crisis situations and popular themes of victimhood	Focus on health system strengthening	Disease-specific focus	Disease-specific focus

International/global health within European countries:

- UK , Germany, France and European Commission*: *Global* health
- Belgium, Denmark (and others): *International* health

Differences in framings

- Absence of charity frame

- Dominance of social justice frame in 'international health' documents
  - *"Inalienable right"*
  - *"The EU should apply the common values and principles of solidarity towards equitable and universal coverage of quality health services in all external and internal policies and actions"*

- Additional security and investment frames in global health documents
  - "Reassure the UK's security and prosperity at home, and UK citizens' interests overseas"

Implications of the increased importance of economic and security frames

+ 'Lift' the topic of global health higher on the policy agenda & increase the visibility and coherence

– Possibility of foreclosing certain areas of action that are of less interest for countries providing assistance

Conclusions

- The European Commission and its member states have different policies and framings to further global health objectives.

- European member states that still hold to a traditional 'international health' approach should consider a shift towards a 'global health' approach

- However, countries engaging in a global health approach should be careful that interest-based motives (security and investment) are in balance with social justice considerations