Meeting summary
EHFF Designing Health Futures Webinar June 5th, 2025

Quick recap
The European Health Futures Forum organized a session on designing the future, with Lars Münter Münter as the host and Daniel Steenstra, Dina von Heimburg, and Mickael Bech as guest speakers. The session aimed to explore how design skills can be used to create a better future, with the first round of discussions was set to focus on individual insights from the speakers' research and work.

The session featured discussions on transforming healthcare systems, addressing challenges, and exploring innovative approaches. Speakers shared insights on organizational transformation, the role of anchor institutions, and the importance of trust and health literacy in achieving lasting change.

The meeting highlighted the need for comprehensive system-wide changes, long-term thinking, and cross-sector collaboration to address the growing gap between healthcare demand and supply, while also exploring potential solutions such as blockchain technology and context-specific innovations.

Full summary
Designing the Future

Career Journeys in Health and Design
The meeting featured introductions from Daniel Steenstra, Dina von Heimburg, Mickael Bech, and Lars Münter, who shared their diverse career backgrounds, including experiences in medicine, car design, nursing, public health, and economics. Daniel Steenstra emphasized his shift from medicine to car design and academia, highlighting the impact of career choices on quality of life and the challenges of health innovation.

Dina von Heimburg discussed her work in nursing and public health, as well as her current role in research on well-being and social sustainability.

Mickael Bech described his career as a health economist and professor, focusing on healthcare leadership and policy.

Lars Münter concluded by inviting Daniel Steenstra to reflect on how insights from his varied experiences could inform health transformation, noting the lack of a direct connection between luxury car design and healthcare systems.

Global Healthcare Transformation and Trust
Daniel Steenstra presented a slide on the global healthcare transformation imperative, highlighting the gap between healthcare demand and supply, particularly in the UK's NHS, which he compared to a "fruit fly" for studying healthcare trends. He argued that other European countries, like the Netherlands and Denmark, should look ahead and prepare for similar transformations by studying

the UK's experience. Daniel Steenstra emphasized the importance of trust in future healthcare systems, noting a growing lack of trust since the 2008 banking crisis and the government's response to COVID-19.

5-Element Organizational Transformation Model

Daniel Steenstra presented a model for organizational transformation that requires alignment across five key elements: culture, leadership, design thinking, innovation, and transformation. He explained that successful transformation involves multidimensional change in these areas simultaneously, drawing from their experience using the 3 Horizons model during COVID-19. The discussion highlighted the importance of shared vision and health literacy in achieving transformational change, with Daniel Steenstra noting that lack of shared vision was identified as a key reason for their current situation.

Healthcare Transformation and Community Impact

Mickael Bech emphasized the need to transform healthcare systems beyond optimization, highlighting the importance of rethinking services and shifting from specialized to more integrated and ecosystem-based approaches. He stressed the necessity of investing in primary care and digital health solutions to address the growing gap between healthcare capacity and demand, driven by increasing expectations and wealth. Dina von Heimburg focused on the need for a whole-of-society approach to health, advocating for anchor institutions like hospitals and kindergartens to drive community well-being and socioeconomic impact. She emphasized the importance of shifting deeper system levels, such as goals and mental models, to achieve lasting transformation and highlighted examples of successful cross-sector collaboration in Norway and beyond.

Anchor Institutions' Healthcare Transformation Role

The group discussed the role of anchor institutions in transforming healthcare, with Dina von Heimburg highlighting how places like kindergartens and postal services can serve as community hubs for health and well-being. Daniel Steenstra shared examples of libraries and local organizations providing unexpected healthcare support during the pandemic, while Mickael Bech described how social housing service workers in Denmark spend a third of their time advising residents on social matters, potentially serving as crucial health connectors. Lars Münter noted that while these innovations exist, there are still significant barriers to widespread transformation in healthcare delivery, and the group agreed to explore these barriers further in future discussions.

Transformative Health Systems Leadership

Dina von Heimburg discussed three common pitfalls in transformation efforts: individualizing complex problems, participation without power, and fragmentation and short-termism. She emphasized the need to shift narratives and policies to see health as emerging from environments, relationships, and justice, and to involve people in meaningful ways with real influence. Dina von Heimburg also highlighted the importance of long-term thinking and institutionalizing cross-sector goals, shared indicator sets, and long-term investment plans to achieve lasting change. She suggested steps to avoid these pitfalls, including understanding system conditions, mapping policies and practices, listening to affected groups, building backbone structures, and empowering the health sector to act as a convener and system integrator.

Healthcare DAO: Trust and Optimization
The group discussed challenges in healthcare systems, with Daniel Steenstra highlighting how the NHS's reliance on lean manufacturing principles during COVID led to PPE shortages, warning against the dangers of system optimization. Daniel Steenstra proposed using blockchain technology through EHFF's DAO model to build trust in healthcare, while Mickael Bech emphasized the pitfalls of incrementalism and optimizing systems in silos. The discussion concluded with Lars Münter noting that while the group identified problems, they also saw potential solutions, particularly in Daniel Steenstra's proposal for a DAO-based approach.

Healthcare Transformation Challenges and Solutions
Mickael Bech highlighted several pitfalls in healthcare transformation, including the need for comprehensive rather than incremental change, addressing cultural and mindset changes, and achieving political ownership. He emphasized the importance of changing professional training to focus on system thinking rather than reactive responses. Dina von Heimburg and Mickael Bech agreed on the need for purpose-driven systems change, increased health literacy, and the development of co-creative platforms. They also stressed the importance of designing for long-term resilience and adaptive learning in healthcare systems.

Design and Clinical Thinking Parallels
The meeting focused on the parallels between design thinking and clinical thinking, with Daniel Steenstra explaining how both processes involve a divergent approach to discovery and problem-solving. The discussion explored how these concepts could be applied to organizations, with Daniel Steenstra suggesting that EHFF could play a coordinating role in supporting grassroots movements. The conversation ended with participants agreeing that future discussions should be scheduled for a longer duration to allow for more comprehensive exploration of the topics.

Healthcare Innovation and Contextual Solutions
The group discussed healthcare system challenges and innovation, with Daniel Steenstra sharing a story about Defi Shetty, a pediatric heart surgeon who revolutionized healthcare in India by reorganizing surgical pathways and training local staff, despite believing it couldn't be done in the NHS. Dina von Heimburg emphasized the importance of context-specific approaches and shared examples from Zimbabwe and Norway, including a mental health program at a Norwegian bank that trained staff to provide compassionate support to customers. The discussion concluded with Lars Münter suggesting the possibility of organizing an additional session to further explore these topics, and the group agreed to stay in touch.

Potential Next steps

- Lars Münter could plan a longer 90-minute session for the next meeting to allow for more in-depth discussion.

- EHFF would explore the potential role of acting as a coordinator/director for grassroots healthcare transformation initiatives.

- Speakers could aim to continue collaboration and sharing insights on healthcare transformation.

- EHFF would investigate how to embed design thinking processes into clinical practices and healthcare organizations.

Advice for all

- All participants to consider how to increase system awareness and capacity for systems thinking among healthcare professionals and leaders.

- All participants to explore ways to shift the goals and mental models of healthcare systems towards viewing health as a value rather than just a sector.

- All participants to investigate how to elevate anchor institutions as platforms for co-creation in healthcare transformation.

- All participants to consider how to design learning ecosystems that link reflection, experimentation, and capacity building to real-world healthcare challenges.