

Health System Resilience

An exploratory analysis of contributory factors in a small state health system

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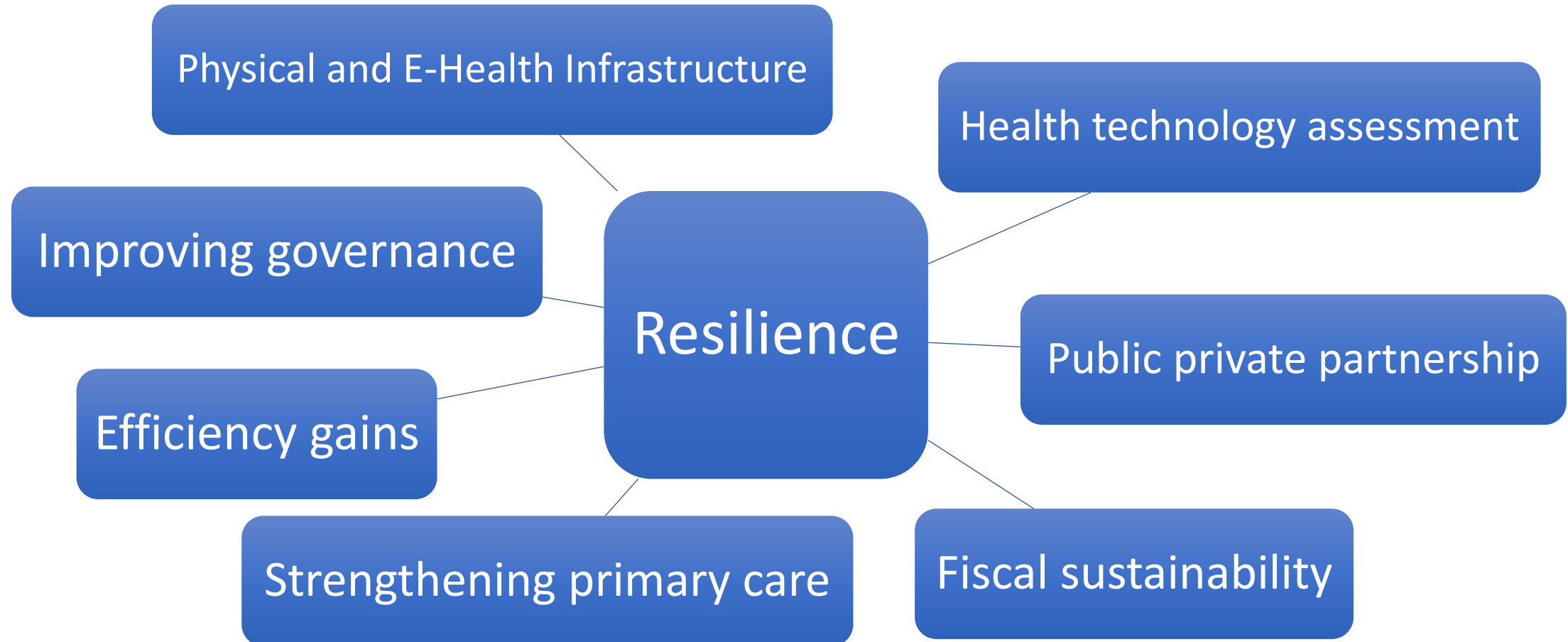
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Health System Resilience??

- Concept of resilience is increasingly used in health systems appraisal
 - Aftermath of the Ebola crisis
 - Aftermath of the financial & economic crisis
- But what is being captured?
- How does one measure the level of resilience?

EU Country Profiles – (Malta)



Starting point

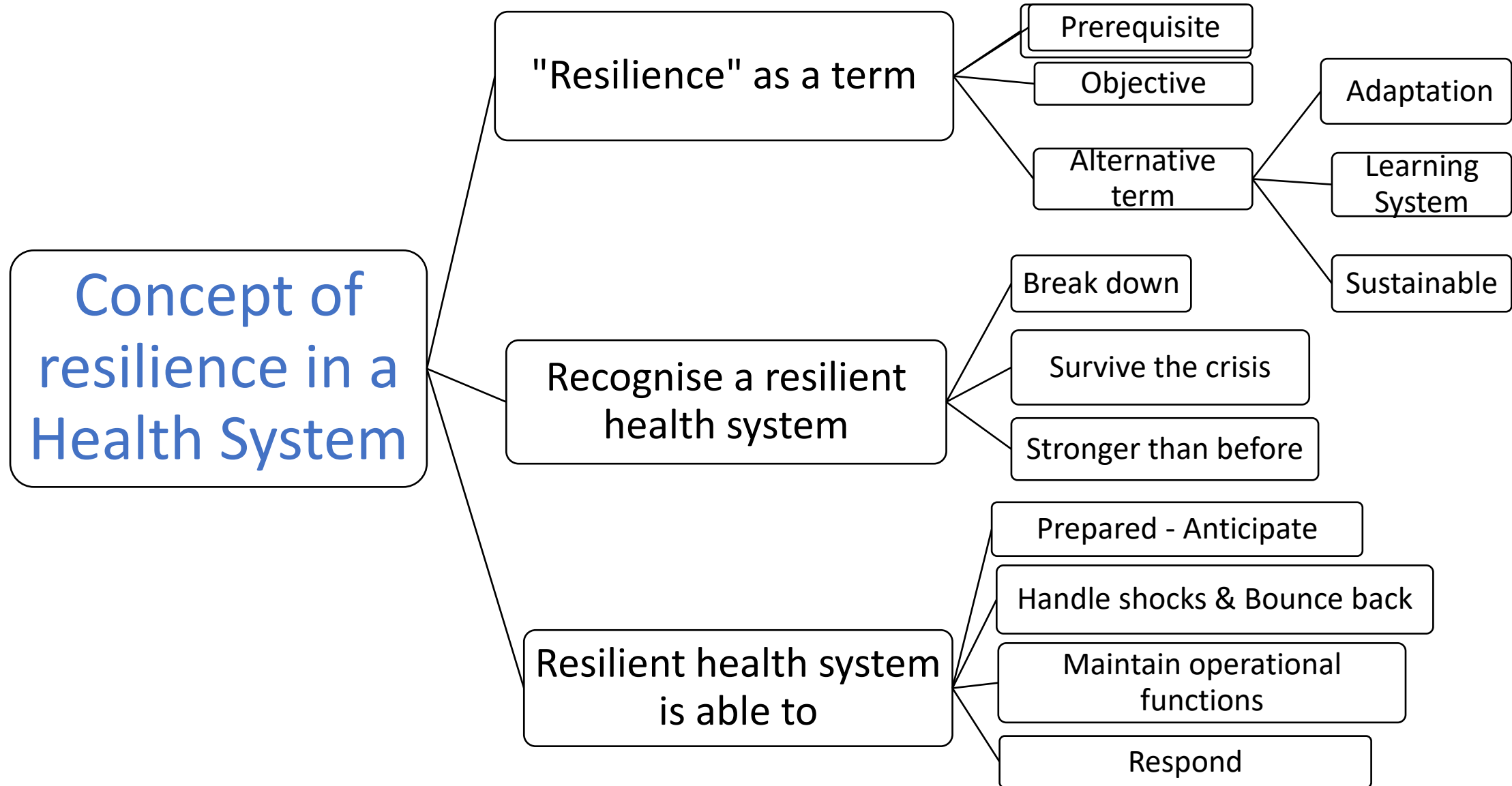
- The concept of resilience as applied to health systems is being increasingly promoted as a dimension of health system performance in spite of the paucity of research and lack of operationalisation of the term
- The utility of resilience as a ‘factor’ that promotes stable and sustainable performance of health systems requires proper characterisation
- Literature on the vulnerability /resilience nexus in small states provides a theoretical framework

Study objectives

- What do international and health system experts (academia, policy and decision makers) identify as health system resilience?
- What are the key factors that build / strengthen, or hinder the development of, or break down health system resilience?
- How can we strengthen resilience in the Maltese health system?

Qualitative case study

- Fifteen semi-structured interviews with purposely selected international health systems experts:
 - How can 'Resilience' be defined in relation to health systems?
 - How can one recognise a resilient health system?
 - What should a resilient health system be able to do?
- Ethnographic research in the Maltese health system:- Workshop on Health System Resilience for senior policy-makers and academics
 - Diagnostic short survey
 - Workshop report



Factors impeding resilience building

General factors

- Multiple health system challenges occurring simultaneously
- Lack of understanding of the resilience concept
- Lack of research

Maltese Health System

- Inherent vulnerability associated with geographic, socio-demographic features
- Inherent vulnerability due to finite and limited resources (human, financial)
- Fragmentation of the health system
- Erosion of social values

Implicit and explicit actions and policies to foster resilient health systems

- Policy formulation in accordance with the vision of the health system
- Investments in adequate and appropriate resources
- Capacity sharing - working across boundaries
- *Improve the capacities of health systems to understand and change*

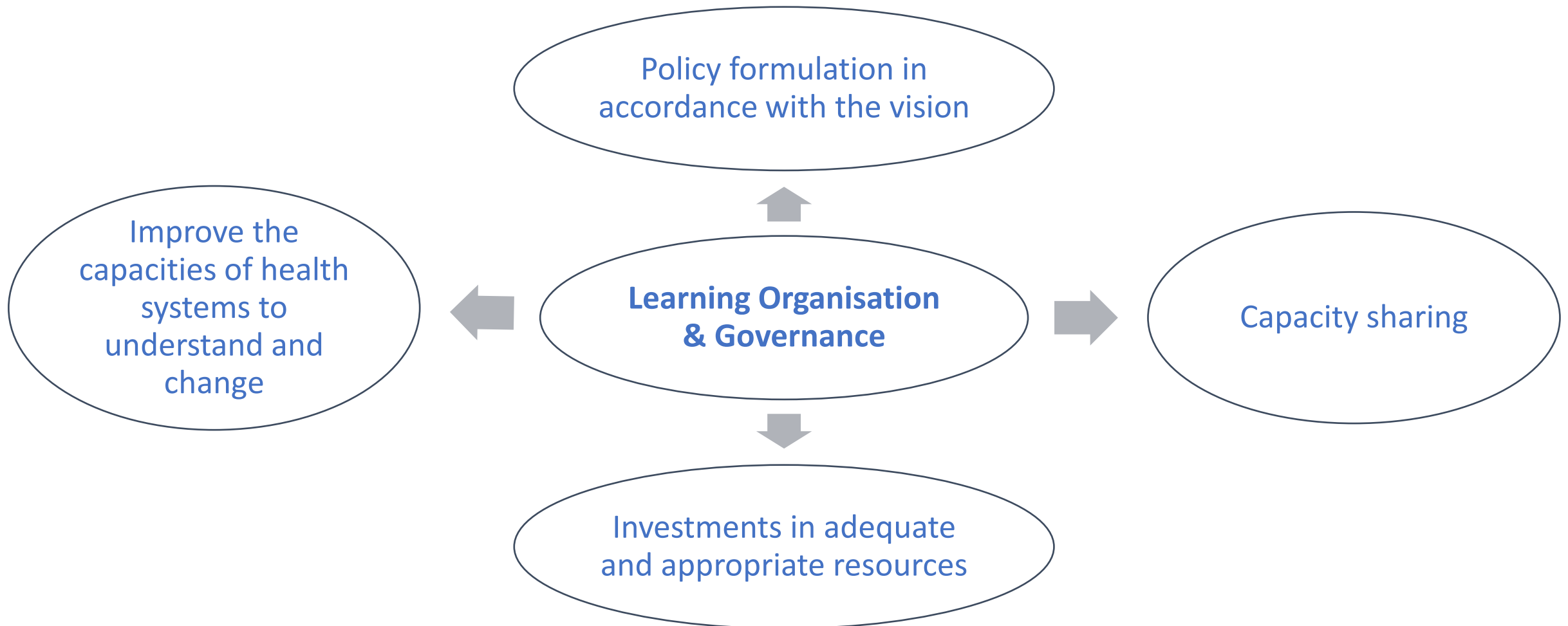
A definition proposal

“Resilience is the capacity of a health system to cope, absorb, adapt, transform, predict, prepare and defend.

It encompasses being reactive, flexible, dynamic, constantly striving to learn to apply innovative solutions to tackle challenges with limited resources.

Innovation and change is pursued whilst simultaneously managing the delivery of the necessary services ”

Framework proposed to foster resilience in health systems



Concluding Remarks (General)

- Resilience in a health system should be construed as a prerequisite and not as a goal
- The absence of resilience is easier to identify than its presence
- There could arise due to a relative lack of awareness of the term and its application, as well as complexity within health systems
- A learning organisation attitude and governance throughout the system at all levels are necessary to build resilience

Concluding Remarks (Small Island States)

- Small island states face specific unique challenges due to their culture, inherent features and limited resources.
- In the small island state context the importance of culture, *values*, working together across boundaries, networking, *awareness of the limited resources*, having a *helicopter view* and having *unbiased, accountable decision-makers* at all the levels, are factors which foster resilience.
- In spite of the barriers and gaps encountered, smalls island state health systems can still foster resilience through ***smart interrelated decision-making*** processes, which identify and grasp opportunities which minimise their vulnerabilities.

Next steps

- Translation of the identified domains into a scale / score that will allow us to measure health system resilience
- Publication of the material from this study
- ? Pilot initiative amongst small states

