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Project Findings

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Project aims

- To develop and establish a Jean Monnet network of universities and public health institutes
- To map and understand better the small states' challenges and opportunities of European integration in health
- To translate findings into policy relevant messages and educational activities



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SMSHealth.eu Project

- 3 year project co-funded by the Erasmus + Programme (September 2015 / August 2018)
- **Project network:** Malta, Estonia, Slovenia, Iceland and The Netherlands (Lead).
- **Technical coordinator:** The University of Malta (Institute for European Studies, with the support of the Department of Health Services Management and the Islands & Small States Institute)



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The research questions

- What are the challenges and opportunities faced by small Member States when it comes to EU integration in the area of health?
 - **General**
 - Medicines
 - Health workforce
 - Cancer
 - Rare Diseases
- Does EU policy recognise small state health system specificities?



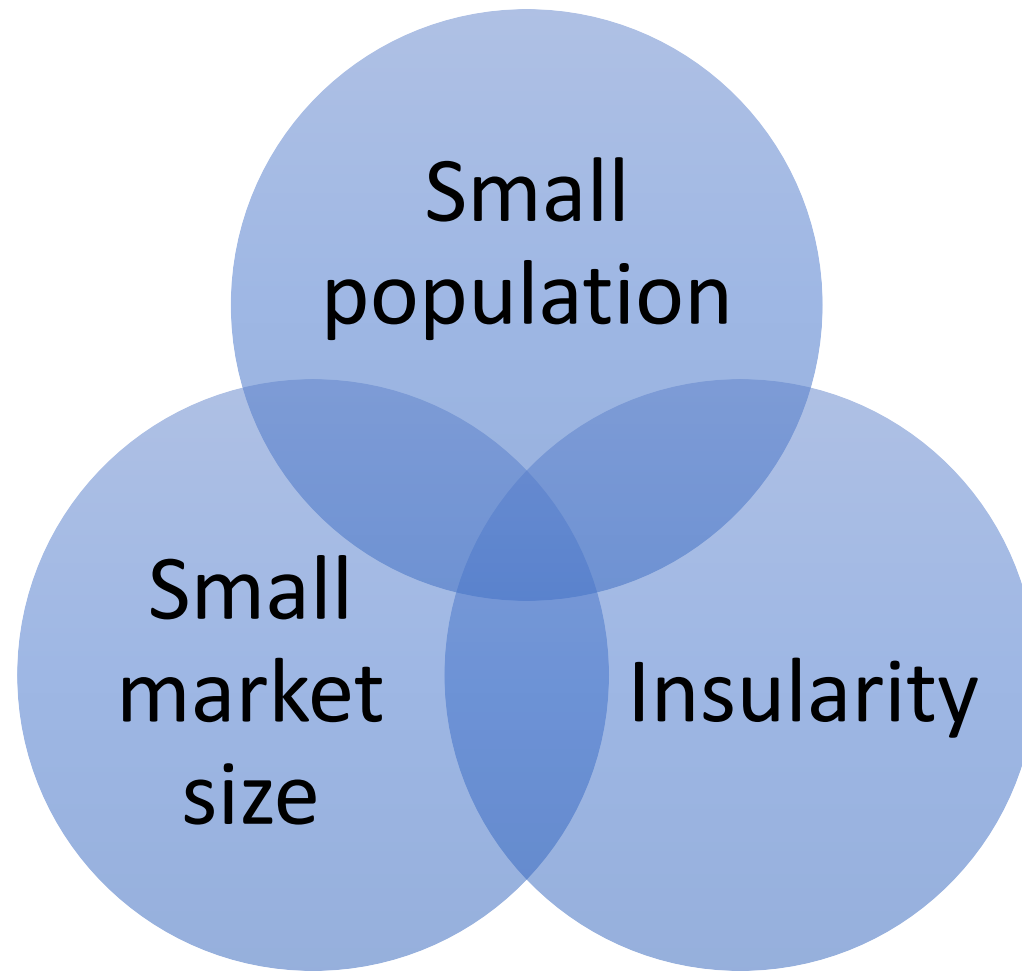
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Interviews conducted n=42

- Access to medicines n=8
- Cancer n=8
- Rare Disease n=9
- Workforce n=8
- General issues n=9



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Strengths

- Ability to govern and manage the whole system '*intimacy*'
- Open to influence and ideas '*from the outside*'
- Lack of bureaucracy makes small countries more flexible, quicker and more responsive
- National level research, communicating and acting



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Weaknesses

- Lack of competition / choice

You are totally dependent on this one hospital and if you do not want to work there you have to go work in the countryside or abroad. This is a disadvantage of being a small state.



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Challenges

- Funding (inability to achieve economies of scale)
- Human resources (quantitative, qualitative)
- Retention of quality and expertise



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Vulnerabilities

- Lack of capacity, (lack of competence) also reflected in absence of national institutions
 - Often exacerbated by brain drain
- Lack of power in relation to controlling interests of national stakeholders and international vested interest groups
- Dependent on cooperation with larger countries
- High visibility of data 'misclassification' particularly for rare outcomes



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Fiscal governance

- Small country CION power asymmetry

We can't just simply say:

"We won't do that."

The pressures on a small country are much greater than on big countries

- Lack of understanding of small country specificities



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It is a challenge to ensure that we have enough specialists that can cover all the specialties in medicine that we need, it is also expensive because then there are not that many people that need some of these specialties. (ICE)



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Public Health opportunities associated with EU membership

- Facilitates national policy implementation
 - E.g. cancer screening (SI), tobacco and alcohol (EE)
- For individual doctors, it has helped them to improve their training opportunities
- Building capacities, investing in resources, sharing of ideas within the network



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Missed opportunities

- Inability to access research funds and 'soft money' due to lack of capacity
- Lack of awareness on the extent to which the EU actually influences health systems in the different Member States, particularly the small states



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The intimacy conundrum

It is always difficult to make decisions in a small country. To make bold decisions the critical mass must be greater. Everybody here is acquainted or interrelated with each other and the playground is small. There is fear of making different decisions. Courageous political decisions should be made from far away and high enough (EST)



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Future role of the EU in Health

- General consensus that health is a matter for subsidiarity
- Reluctance for the EU to take on a larger role in health

On one hand it is good for people to interact and liaise with other people ... but I don't know whether the demands are proportional to what we are receiving at the end of the day. (MLT)



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Preferred / Suitable modalities for action

- Voluntary cooperation
- Joint Actions
- Recommendations where there is a need for a push to do something



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Taking the analysis forward



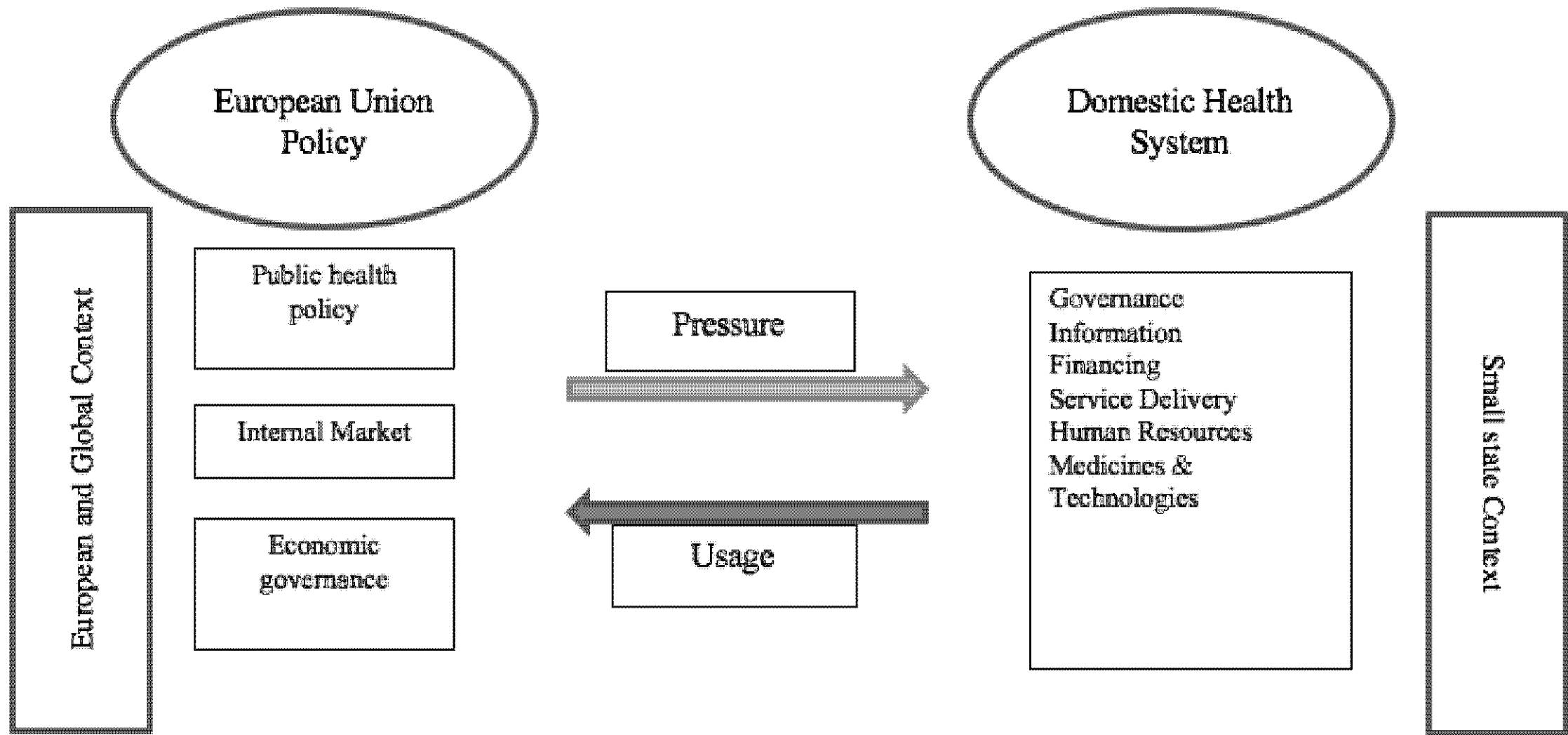
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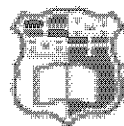
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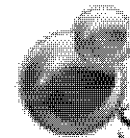
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European Innovation, Research and Training

What evidence have we found to support these hypotheses?

- A high level of goal alignment between the EU and the MS, particularly if accompanied by the opportunity for capacity enhancement will lead to enthusiasm for Europeanisation
- A low level of goal alignment between the EU and the MS, and a high degree of administrative burden will trigger resistance towards health system Europeanisation.



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The policy questions

- How may small states be affected if health is “pushed off” the EU agenda?
- What are the key messages that small states wish to deliver for EU action in the field of health post 2020?



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Closure & Dissemination Event

- Draft of the scientific paper on the general findings
- Key messages flier for policy makers
- Vlog / YouTube etc



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