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WHO EUROPEAN REGION MEMBER STATES ADOPT TWO LANDMARK HEALTH EMERGENCY ACTION PLANS



On 31 October 2024, at the 74th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe in Copenhagen, a major milestone was achieved for the WHO European Region – the Member States adopted two critical strategies aimed at enhancing health emergency preparedness and response regionwide. The adoption of both the Preparedness 2.0 regional strategy and action plan on health emergency preparedness,

response and resilience (2024–2029), and the Emergency Medical Teams (EMT) regional action plan 2024–2030 underscores the ongoing commitment of the 53 Member States of the WHO European Region to building resilience and bolstering health security for individual countries and the Region as a whole.

Read more here: [WHO European Region Member States adopt two landmark health emergency action plans: Preparedness 2.0 strategy and action plan and the Emergency Medical Teams regional action plan 2024–2030](#)

DR HANS HENRI P. KLUGE NOMINATED BY MEMBER STATES TO SERVE AS WHO REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR EUROPE FOR A SECOND FIVE-YEAR TERM



The Member States of the WHO European Region have nominated Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge as WHO Regional Director for Europe for a second five-year term, which will begin in February 2025 after his formal election by the WHO Executive Board.

Addressing delegates at the 74th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe, meeting in Copenhagen, Dr Kluge expressed his gratitude.

“Serving as WHO Regional Director for Europe has been the honour of my life, and I am truly so thankful – and humbled – by the overwhelming

support demonstrated for my nomination. Looking ahead to my second term next year, my first task will be to consult all 53 Member States across Europe and central Asia, as well as all our health partners, to develop our next five-year plan together, also known as the European Programme of Work’s second edition,” said Dr Kluge.

Read more here: [Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge nominated by Member States to serve as WHO Regional Director for Europe for a second five-year term](#)

COVID-19 VACCINE EFFECTIVENESS AGAINST SARS-COV-2-CONFIRMED



A [new study from the WHO Regional Office for Europe](#) shows that COVID-19 vaccines prevented over half of COVID-19-related hospitalizations and over half of all severe outcomes, including death. These findings highlight again the power of COVID-19 vaccination to safeguard health,

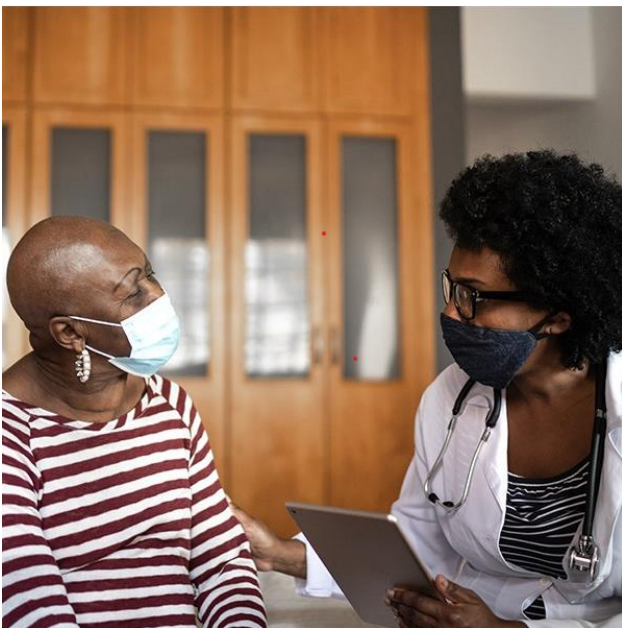
especially for the most vulnerable, including older persons and people with underlying conditions.

Published today in *The Lancet Regional Health – Europe*, this COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness study, conducted in six countries and areas (Albania, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo) from January 2022 to November 2023, is the first study to evaluate COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness in middle-income countries and areas across the eastern part of the WHO European Region. The six countries and areas are part of EuroSAVE – the European Severe Acute Respiratory Infection Vaccine Effectiveness network.

The study also found that despite the vaccine’s effectiveness, vaccine uptake was very low, pointing yet again to the need for governments and health authorities to ensure that those who could benefit the most from COVID-19 vaccine have access to the vaccine and are encouraged to get vaccinated.

Read the study here: <https://bit.ly/3Ccs8vx>

HARM REDUCTION SHOULD BE INTEGRATED INTO UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE PLANS: UN EXPERT



“Harm reduction services within models for universal health coverage are key to ensuring that many groups who are pushed to the fringes of society are not left behind,” a UN expert said.

“In line with universal health coverage, harm reduction should incorporate comprehensive quality services that are accessible and affordable,” said Tlaleng Mofokeng, the Special Rapporteur on the right to health.

In her report to the UN General Assembly, Mofokeng explored the model of harm reduction as applicable to cases of drug use, HIV exposure, transmission and non-disclosure, abortion, same-sex relations, and sex work. She highlighted populations that are often stigmatised, criminalised and discriminated against to the detriment of their enjoyment of human rights and

urged States to “divest from punitive approaches, move away from criminalisation and employ regulatory tools to improve health outcomes.”

“There is no path to sustainable peace and development without the meaningful participation of populations that face historic and ongoing forms of discrimination and marginalisation,” the expert said.

The Special Rapporteur called for the decriminalisation of abortion and guarantees of access to quality care; the repeal of laws, policies, and practices that criminalise sex work and the adoption of measures to ensure sex workers’ right to health; the repeal of laws that criminalise HIV exposure, transmission and non-disclosure and the decriminalisation of the use, possession, purchase and cultivation of drugs for personal use.

She stressed that universal health coverage should make essential medicines accessible and affordable and should extend beyond health care programmes and services to encompass the social determinants of health. *“Crises are often used as a pretext to increase policing or criminalisation of already vulnerable or marginalised populations, often adding to, rather than mitigating, the harms of the crisis itself,”* the expert warned.

“The report is a compilation of good practices from a range of different actors,” Mofokeng said.

“In working towards sustainable peace and development, all stakeholders must incorporate human rights and harm reduction approaches into evidence-based and stigma-free legislations, policies, programmes and practices, linked with universal health coverage in order to create conditions that are conducive to a life of dignity of all people,” she said.

ADVANCING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ONE HEALTH APPROACH IN THE EUROPEAN REGION



The health of humans, animals and ecosystems is linked – this has long been noted. With this interconnectedness comes the risk of spreading many types of infectious diseases, as was highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. An integrated One Health approach addresses these linkages and vulnerabilities, aiming to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems

through multi sectoral and disciplinary collaboration.

To this end, and to deepen One Health advocacy and solicit high level commitment, the WHO Regional Office for Europe held a high-level briefing as part of the 74th Session of the WHO Europe Regional Committee to engage Member States to adopt, adapt and implement the One Health approach based on their context and in line with global and regional priorities.

“At the heart of the European Programme of Work (EPW) is the commitment to collective action for a healthier region. One Health plays a key role in this, recognizing the deep connections between human, animal, and environmental health. In today’s world, where health challenges are more complex than ever, this approach is essential,” said Dr Hans Kluge, WHO Europe Regional Director, as he urged Member States to pursue coordinated action.

Read our campaign page on [One Health](#)

WHO AND FAO JOINT STATEMENT ON HEALTHY DIETS



Healthy diets promote health, growth, and development, support active lifestyles, prevent nutrient deficiencies and excesses, communicable and noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), foodborne diseases and promote wellbeing.

The critical role of diets in the prevention of all forms of malnutrition, for disease prevention and health promotion, as well as the interconnections between food production, diets and the environment, have never been more evident. With such prominence in the scientific literature and public media has come a range of definitions and perspectives about what constitute healthy diets, and how these can be achieved, while protecting the environment. Heads have turned to the agrifood system and the ways in which it can and must be transformed

to contribute to the commitments of ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition, elevating levels of human health, and protecting and restoring the environment. But lack of consensus of what constitute healthy diets can undermine progress and continuity of efforts to achieve them.

To accelerate progress towards the achievement of these interconnected commitments, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have formulated principles of what constitute healthy diets. These principles, set out below, and recognized by the scientific literature, are underpinned by guidelines and other normative elements developed by the two Organizations. Multiple dietary patterns that meet these principles, and in which foods are safe, can therefore be defined as healthy dietary patterns.

Read the full statement here: [What are healthy diets? Joint statement by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Health Organization](#)

JOINT STATEMENT BY THE WHO DIRECTOR-GENERAL AND THE WHO CIVIL SOCIETY TASK FORCE ON TUBERCULOSIS

The recently published Global Tuberculosis Report 2024 presents an update on progress and challenges in the global fight against TB in 2023. Tuberculosis struck 10.8 million people in 2023, and killed around 1.25 million (including 161 000 co-infected with HIV), making it the top leading cause of death from an infectious agent. This is despite TB being a preventable and treatable disease, with rapid diagnostics, newer and safer drugs, shorter regimens, and updated guidelines and policies based on the latest evidence. While there has been significant progress against TB, it has been too slow, due largely to chronic underfunding of the TB response globally.

In view of these new findings, WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and the WHO Civil Society Task Force on TB, have issued a joint statement emphasizing the need to translate the commitments made by United Nations Member States at the 2nd UN General Assembly High-level meeting on the fight against tuberculosis in September 2023. In that historic event, Member States adopted a political declaration in which they committed to achieving ambitious targets by 2027:

- Diagnose and treat 90% of people with TB;
- Provide TB preventive treatment to 90% of those eligible;
- Test 100% of people with TB with rapid diagnostic tests;
- Ensure that all people with TB have access to a health and social benefits package;
- License at least one new TB vaccine within 5 years;
- Mobilize at least US\$ 22 billion a year by 2027, and US\$ 5 billion for TB research.

The joint statement expressed deep concern that the current funding allocation for TB from both domestic and international sources is grossly insufficient. According to the Global Tuberculosis Report 2024, annual funding available for TB in 2023 was only US\$ 5.7 billion. Achieving the targets in the political declaration will require an almost four-fold increase, to US\$ 22 billion per year by 2027. Without adequate investment, the targets that world leaders have set will remain a wish list.

ON WORLD CITIES DAY 2024, WHO RELEASED TOOLS TO FOSTER HEALTHIER CITIES FOR EMPOWERED YOUTH



As more than half of the global population now lives in cities, young people in particular are drawn to urban areas for their educational and employment opportunities as well as rich social and cultural experiences. The theme of World Cities Day 2024 highlights the critical role of youth-led actions in solving urban challenges and empowering young people as gamechangers.

Empowering youth in cities goes hand-in-hand with fostering healthier urban environments. When cities prioritize urban health, they cultivate spaces that allow young people to thrive – both physically and mentally. Healthier urban settings empower youth to become agents of change, driving the transformative initiatives essential for a brighter future.

To support these efforts, the World Health Organization (WHO) has unveiled a collection of new tools specifically designed to enhance urban health outcomes. These resources aim to assist local authorities in developing health strategies and policies that benefit all urban dwellers including youth.

Youth health and well-being are complex and require collaboration across different sectors and stakeholders. In response to these needs, WHO launched a new [Urban Health Capacities Assessment and Response Resource Kit](#). The kit helps cities conduct a self-assessment of key capacities required for integrated, coordinated policy-making around their priority health issues. It offers a self-assessment primer and action guide with step-by-step instructions, as well as training videos. There are also real-world examples from cities showing how self-assessments have been conducted and used to support their work. Overall, the kit emphasizes the importance of connectivity and collaboration in urban health practices and policymaking, helping cities to create holistic, well-integrated public health strategies.

SUMMARY OF ALCOHOL POLICY PLAYBOOK – EMPOWERING PUBLIC HEALTH ADVOCATES TO NAVIGATE ALCOHOL POLICY CHALLENGES



Reframing alcohol:
a summary of the Alcohol
policy playbook

Profit-seeking and public health perspectives
on reducing alcohol use and its harm:
weighing up the public health evidence
for the health of everyone

It is now well-established that alcohol is harmful to health. In response, the World Health Organization (WHO) introduced an international strategy in 2010 to prioritize alcohol use as a public health issue. This strategy is supported by a reference framework and an action plan, which outline key public health policies and measures that countries can adopt to reduce alcohol consumption and its health impacts.

This summary is the entry point to the [Alcohol policy playbook](#). It highlights how key public health questions about alcohol are addressed differently depending on whether one adopts a perspective driven by the public good or a perspective driven by profit.

It first compares these perspectives at a glance. It then presents the main opposing arguments about alcohol policies that are of fundamental importance to public policy-makers.

WHO EMERGENCIES

Health emergencies list

The health emergencies list details the disease outbreaks, disasters and humanitarian crises where WHO plays an essential role in supporting countries to respond to and recover from emergencies with public health consequences.

[Mpox EURO \(who.int\)](#)

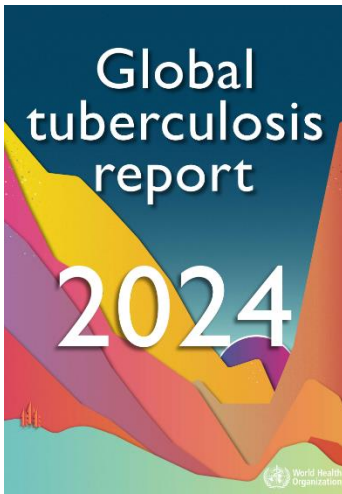
[Ukraine emergency \(who.int\)](#)

[Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) pandemic \(who.int\)](#)

[Conflict in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory \(who.int\)](#)

WHO PUBLICATION

Tuberculosis resurges as top infectious disease killer



The World Health Organization (WHO) published [a new report on tuberculosis](#) revealing that approximately 8.2 million people were newly diagnosed with TB in 2023 - the highest number recorded since WHO began global TB monitoring in 1995. This represents a notable increase from 7.5 million reported in 2022.

The WHO Global Tuberculosis Report 2024 highlights mixed progress in the global fight against TB, with persistent challenges such as significant underfunding. While the number of TB-related deaths decreased from 1.32 million in 2022 to 1.25 million in 2023, the total number of people falling ill with TB rose slightly to an estimated 10.8 million in 2023, placing TB again as the leading infectious disease killer in 2023, surpassing COVID-19.

With the disease disproportionately affecting people in 30 high-burden countries, India (26%), Indonesia (10%), China (6.8%), the Philippines (6.8%) and Pakistan (6.3%) together accounted for 56% of global TB burden. According to the report, 55% of people who developed TB were men, 33% were women and 12% were children and young adolescents.

Regional digital health action plan for the WHO European Region 2023–2030

WHO/Europe’s two-year [Progress Report on the Regional digital health action plan \(2023–2030\)](#) highlights



advancements across 18 focus areas, emphasizing innovation, accessibility, and health system resilience. WHO/Europe will continue collaborating with countries to expand research and capacity, focusing on digital health’s roles in climate sustainability, antimicrobial resistance, gender issues, and healthy aging.

The regional digital health action plan identifies four strategic priorities for the achievement of this vision: (i) setting norms and developing technical guidance; (ii) enhancing country capacities to better govern digital transformation in the health sector and advance digital health literacy; (iii) building networks and promoting dialogue and knowledge exchange; and (iv) conducting horizon-scanning and landscape analysis for patient-centred solutions that can be scaled up.

WHO publications on critical topics in blood safety and quality

A blood product is any therapeutic substance derived from human blood, including whole blood and other blood components for transfusion, and plasma-derived medicinal products (PDMPs).

Medicinal (medical therapeutic) products derived from human donations of blood and plasma play a critical role in health care. Safe, effective and quality-assured blood products contribute to improving and saving millions of lives every year, as they: address child mortality and maternal health; dramatically improve the life expectancy and quality of life of patients suffering from life-threatening inherited disorders, such as haemophilia, thalassaemia and immune deficiency,



and acquired conditions such as cancer and traumatic haemorrhage; and support complex medical and surgical procedures, including transplantation.

An insufficient or unsafe blood supply for transfusion has a

negative impact on the effectiveness of key health services and programmes to provide appropriate patient care in numerous acute and chronic conditions. Ensuring access of all patients who require transfusion to safe, effective and quality-assured blood products is a key component of an effective health system and vital for patient safety.

Publications can be accessed here: [Blood products](#)

WHO EVENTS & COURSES

The Future is Now: Global Action for Meaningful Health Outcomes Improvement



ICHOM (International Consortium for Health Outcomes Measurement) 2024 is officially over! With over 650 attendees from 45+ countries, the buzz of innovation, fresh ideas, and an incredible sense of community were unstoppable.

From mind-blowing keynotes to game-changing discussions, the Beurs van Berlage became the epicenter of value-based healthcare and patient outcomes transformation.

Below you will find a recap of just a few of the highlights over the two days: leaders pushed boundaries, bold ideas came to life, and the opportunities for patient-centered outcomes was buzzing with excitement.

You can still gain access to the insights of ICHOM 2024 by booking your Digital Pass here: [Value-based healthcare conference: ICHOM 2024 | 21-22 October](#)

WHO Global Meeting on Palliative Care

Hosted by the WHO Collaborating Centre at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, United States of America, brought together experts from around the world to focus on advancing palliative care services. This two-day gathering emphasized the importance of strengthening palliative care for both adults and children, aiming to address the unique needs of individuals with life-limiting conditions. Participants included palliative care professionals, researchers, and health policymakers, who shared insights, strategies, and best practices to improve access to compassionate, high-quality palliative care globally.

Key topics included expanding resources, integrating palliative care into national health systems, and enhancing training for healthcare providers to ensure comprehensive care that alleviates pain and improves the quality of life for patients and their families. This collaborative effort reflects WHO's commitment to making palliative care an essential component of universal health coverage.

Webinar to introduce recently published WHO blood products guidance documents - 13 December 2024

Don't miss this opportunity to engage with experts and enhance your understanding of WHO's latest standards in blood safety and quality!

The MHP Health Products Policy and Standards (HPS) department is pleased to invite you to a virtual meeting to discuss recent WHO publications on critical topics in blood safety and quality:

- Ensuring Safe Blood Supply during Emergencies
- Implementation of Quality Systems in Blood Establishments
- Cross-Border Transfer of Domestic Plasma for Plasma-Derived Medicinal Products (PDMP)

This session is designed for blood regulatory officials, National Regulatory Authorities, directors of blood establishments, and key partners in blood services. Join us to gain valuable insights and participate in discussions on enhancing global blood safety and quality standards.

Meeting Details:

Date and time: 13 December 2024

- Morning session (English, Chinese Russian): 09:00-11:00 CET

Registration Link: https://who.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_94IamfnKQa2mgkNIQfMSAg

- Afternoon Session (English, French, Spanish): 16:00-18:00 CET

Registration Link: https://who.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_9uQcogOqR2-mTYIMTd9k6g

WATCH

[RC74 – Harnessing innovation for public health 2025-2030](#)

[\(World Health Organization \(WHO\) - YouTube\)](#)

SOURCES

- <https://www.who.int/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/c/whoregionalofficeforeurope>

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