

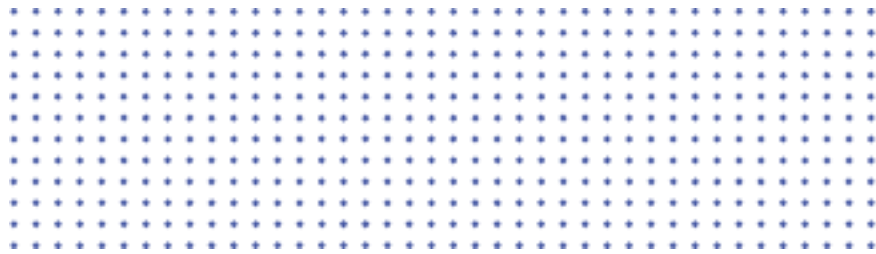


# **PUBLIC HEALTH REPORT**

## **World Health Organization in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

17 February 2025





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## DR HANS HENRI P. KLUGE REAPPOINTED AS WHO REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR EUROPE



Belgian national Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge has commenced his second five-year term as the Regional Director for WHO/Europe, based in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Dr Kluge was formally appointed to the role for a second term at the 156th session of the WHO Executive Board in Geneva, Switzerland, on 4 February 2025. It follows his nomination by the 53 Member States of the WHO European Region in October last year.

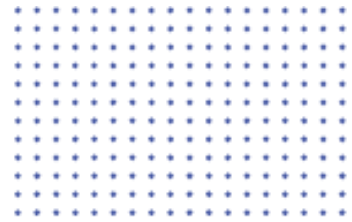
*“We will continue to build on the many successes of the past five years, including our work on pandemic preparedness and health system strengthening, mental health, digital health, and immunization,”* said Dr Kluge. *“But we will also expand our priorities to include critical areas like strengthening national health security, tackling the health impacts of the climate crisis, taking urgent action on antimicrobial resistance and promoting healthy ageing amid rapidly shifting demographics. All of this will be complemented by a renewed focus on women, girls and youth, including by addressing the damaging pushback on sexual and reproductive health and rights, and a concerning rise in gender-based violence.”*

Dr Kluge began his first term as Regional Director just as the COVID-19 pandemic was taking hold, devastating lives and livelihoods everywhere and placing unprecedented pressures on health systems. As COVID-19 began to come under control, another health emergency – mpox – emerged in the European Region before becoming a global concern.

Dr Kluge’s second term as Regional Director will see the implementation of the second European Programme of Work, better known as the EPW2. This five-year plan is currently being developed in close consultation with all Member States as well as civil society and WHO staff.

Read more: <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/10-02-2025-dr-hans-henri-p-kluge-reappointed-as-who-regional-director-for-europe>

## ALCOHOL LABELS SHOULD WARN OF CANCER RISK, SAYS NEW WHO/EUROPE REPORT



Prominent health warning labels on alcoholic beverages are essential for raising awareness that consuming alcohol can lead to cancer. This simple and inexpensive measure can empower consumers to make informed choices that can help reduce alcohol-related harms. A new report from WHO/Europe, “Alcohol health warning labels: a public health perspective for Europe”, underscores the urgent need for mandatory, standardized labelling on alcoholic beverages.

Alcohol causes about 800 000 deaths annually in the WHO European Region. Many countries of the Region have yet to make significant progress in implementing alcohol harm reduction policies. Despite cancer being the leading cause of alcohol-attributable deaths in the European Union (EU), public awareness of the link between alcohol and cancer remains alarmingly low.

A WHO/Europe study featured in the report, conducted across 14 European Region countries, revealed a striking gap in awareness: only 15% of respondents knew that alcohol causes breast cancer, and just 39% were aware of its link to colon cancer. These cancers account for the highest proportion of alcohol-related cancers in the EU among women (breast cancer) and men (colon cancer).

*“Clear and prominent health warning labels on alcohol, which include a specific cancer warning are a cornerstone of the right to health, because they empower individuals with vital information to make informed choices about the harm alcoholic products can cause. Providing this information does not take anything away from consumers, on the contrary, it arms them with knowledge, and knowledge is power,”* said Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe.

Alcohol health warning labels are currently implemented in only 3 out of 27 EU countries and only 13 out of the 53 WHO European Region Member States, leaving consumers unaware of the risks they face.

More info: <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/14-02-2025-alcohol-labels-should-warn-of-cancer-risk-says-new-who-europe-report>



## WORLD CANCER DAY: CLOSING THE CARE GAP



Cancer is one of the world's leading causes of death, and its burden is growing. In 2021, the world crossed a sobering new threshold – an estimated 20 million people were diagnosed with cancer, and 10 million died. These numbers will continue to rise in the decades ahead. And yet all cancers can be treated, and many can be prevented or cured. Care for cancer, however, like so many other diseases, reflects the inequalities and inequities of our world. The clearest distinction is between high- and low-income countries, with comprehensive treatment reportedly available in more than 90% of high-income

countries but less than 15% of low-income countries.

Similarly, the survival of children diagnosed with cancer is more than 80% in high-income countries, and less than 30% in low- and middle-income countries. And breast cancer survival five years after diagnosis now exceeds 80% in most high-income countries, compared with 66% in India and just 40% in South Africa.

Furthermore, a recent WHO survey found that cancer services are covered by a country's largest, government health financing scheme in an estimated 37% of low- and middle-income countries, compared to at least 78% of high-income countries. This means that a cancer diagnosis has the potential to push families into poverty, particularly in lower-income countries, an effect that has been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For all these reasons, the theme for this year's World Cancer Day is "closing the care gap". And fortunately, much is being done to bring quality cancer care to countries for which, up until now, it has been out of reach. WHO's efforts are focused on breast cancer, now the most common cancer; cervical cancer, that can be eliminated; and childhood cancer. The focus for each of these initiatives is low- and middle-income countries, where the biggest public health gains are to be made.

Read more: <https://www.who.int/news/item/03-02-2022-world-cancer-day-closing-the-care-gap>

## WHO DIRECTOR-GENERAL'S CLOSING REMARKS AT THE 156<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD



In his closing remarks at the 156<sup>th</sup> session of the Executive Board on 11 February 2025, WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus expressed gratitude to Chair Dr Jerome Walcott, Member States, non-state actors, and UN organizations for their engagement and support. He highlighted the Board's significant agenda, notably the recommendation of the Programme Budget 2026-27 to the World Health Assembly and the approval of a 20% increase in assessed contributions, aiming to reach 50% of the base budget. Dr Tedros emphasized that this decision marks a substantial step toward sustainable financing for WHO, reducing reliance on a few traditional donors.

He acknowledged Member States' expectations for results and value for money, aligning with their calls for budget allocations that reflect their priorities, realistic funding-based prioritization, workforce recognition, improved efficiency, enhanced oversight, and reduced unnecessary expenditures. Dr Tedros affirmed WHO's commitment to these objectives, operating under twin strategic goals: mobilizing new resources and exercising fiscal prudence.

Beyond financial matters, Dr Tedros commended the Board's adoption of resolutions on various health issues, including universal health coverage, communicable and noncommunicable diseases, emergencies, polio, meningitis, cervical cancer, substandard and falsified medicines, medical devices, the health and care workforce, digital health, and women's, children's, and adolescents' health.

He also expressed regret over the United States' announced intention to withdraw from WHO, noting their reduced participation during the session and expressing hope for their reconsideration and re-engagement.

Dr Tedros concluded by reaffirming WHO's commitment to its founding vision: achieving the highest attainable standard of health for all people as a fundamental right. He wished all participants a safe journey home and pledged ongoing communication and updates.

Read the full remarks here: <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-closing-remarks-at-the-156th-session-of-the-executive-board--11-february-2025>

# USE OF DIGITAL HEALTH TECHNOLOGIES FOR DEMENTIA CARE



Dementia is a progressive neurocognitive syndrome currently cited as the seventh leading cause of death worldwide. This degenerative disease is also one of the leading causes of disability or dependency for ageing populations today. Dementia places a substantial burden on health care systems, national economies, and families, who often bear the responsibility of caregiving. Beyond the financial and logistical strain, individuals with dementia endure profound

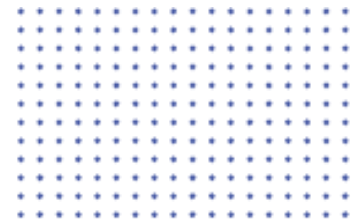
cognitive and neurological challenges, significantly affecting their quality of life. In 2019, dementia affected over 55 million people globally and cost the world economy US\$ 1.3 trillion. Nearly half of the financial burden was borne by informal caregivers. With no currently available cure, efforts are focused on disease management, improving quality of life, and providing well-being support.

In recent years, the health care landscape has undergone a profound transformation with the integration of digital health technologies (DHTs), particularly those applicable to the care of people living with dementia and their health care providers, both formal and informal. Digital solutions offer novel avenues for enhancing medical care by supporting early diagnoses and implementing better preventive strategies. Furthermore, DHTs can potentially minimize the burden of care felt by family members, who often devote over five hours daily to providing care and supervision.

Recognizing the value of multidisciplinary research initiatives, the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe has taken a leading role in advancing scientific research in this area. Key initiatives have made significant contributions to exploring the intersection between digital health and healthy aging, including the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030), the WHO Global Digital Health Strategy 2020–2025, the Regional Digital Health Action Plan for the WHO European Region 2023–2030, and the WHO European Framework for Action on Mental Health 2021–2025.

Full report available at: <https://mental.jmir.org/2025/1/e64445>

## SECOND HEARING OF EPW2 MEMBER STATE FOCAL POINTS AND NATIONAL COUNTERPARTS



Over 50 Member State focal points and national counterparts contributing to the development process of the second European Programme of Work, 2026–2030 (EPW2) attended the second hearing. The session began with a summary of the outcomes of the first EPW2 hearing on tackling noncommunicable diseases and advancing mental health that took place on 22 January 2025. Participants were then updated

on plans to develop a futures paper that will synthesize contributions from the hearings and outline collective actions to promote health in the context of the megatrends affecting the WHO European Region.

In smaller discussion groups, focal points and counterparts reflected on how to prioritize WHO/Europe’s actions to deliver EPW2. There was common agreement that priority actions must complement and contribute to WHO’s global 14<sup>th</sup> General Programme of Work (GPW14), and should cover areas where WHO has a unique role and comparative advantage.

Participants noted that the prioritization process should acknowledge different priorities for national, subregional and regional levels, and that assessment of possible activities should be based on set criteria such as feasibility, impact and cost-effectiveness.

Discussions about the country dialogues emphasized the need to engage across government ministries and sectors, that different dialogue models will apply for countries with or without country offices, and that there should be flexibility to gather both open qualitative reflections and structured input (such as by survey) in these consultations. Several country representatives explained that plans for their country consultations are already underway.

Read more: <https://www.who.int/europe/news-room/events/item/2025/01/28/default-calendar/second-meeting-of-epw2-member-state-focal-points-and-national-counterparts>





## STRENGTHENING CRISIS COMMUNICATION IN HEALTHCARE



The Ministry of Health of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and the Red Cross of FBiH, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) Country Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), organized a two-day workshop focused on Crisis Communication and Social Media Management. The event, which gathered 30 public relations professionals from the healthcare sector from across FBiH, aimed to enhance the capacities of healthcare

professionals and institutional representatives in managing crisis situations more effectively.

*"Effective risk communication, community engagement, and infodemic management are essential for building trust and key to successful emergency. This training is a crucial step in strengthening the capacity of healthcare workers and communication professionals to navigate crises and use the right communication channels to engage with communities effectively,"* said Dr Erwin Cooreman, WHO Special Representative in BiH.

The workshop emphasized the importance of timely and strategic use of social media platforms to inform the public, raise awareness, and counter misinformation during health crises. Participants were provided with the necessary tools to strengthen communication strategies, ensuring that accurate and reliable information reaches the public during critical moments.

*"This was a valuable experience for the healthcare workers and public relations professionals to understand the complexity of communication and the use of appropriate tools to ensure messages reach those who need the information most. This is an important development as the use of social media as a communication tool in the health sector will only be increasing,"* said Dr Goran Čerkez, Assistant Minister for Public Health at the Ministry of Health of FBiH.

Effective stakeholder communication is no longer optional, and its importance cannot be overestimated, especially in a world where crises are increasingly frequent. As Vedran Persić, expert in communications and workshop trainer, emphasizes: *"Now, more than ever, regular communication with stakeholders is essential. In an era where the likelihood of facing a crisis is 80 times higher, preparedness and authenticity are crucial".*

## WHO EMERGENCIES



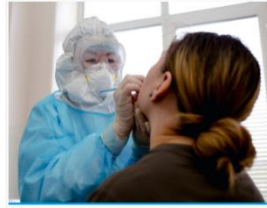
WHO flash appeal: Syria emergency



Conflict in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory



Ukraine emergency



COVID 19

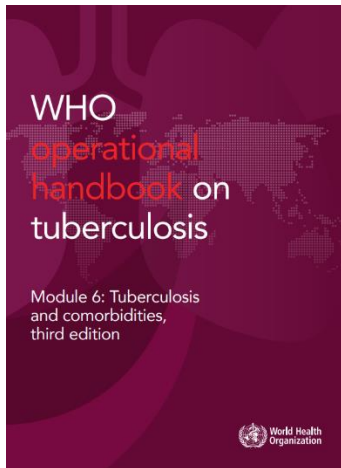
/ [Syria Emergency Response](#) / [Conflict in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory](#) / [Ukraine Emergency](#) / [COVID-19](#) /

## EVENTS AND COURSES

- **Intercountry workshop on strengthening capacity to support the health needs of refugees and displaced people from Ukraine**  
Date: 18 and 19 February  
Location: Bucharest, Romania  
More info: <https://bit.ly/4hBXrQv>
- **Health systems of the future: harnessing technology and innovation in health for everyone everywhere**  
Date: 21 February  
Location: Online  
More info: <https://bit.ly/4gEuRg1>

# PUBLICATIONS

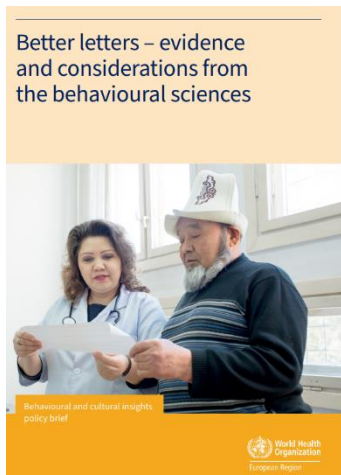
## Operational handbook on tuberculosis: module 6: tuberculosis and comorbidities



Addressing comorbidities and risk factors for tuberculosis (TB) is a crucial component of the World Health Organization (WHO)'s End TB Strategy. This "WHO operational handbook on tuberculosis – Module 6: tuberculosis and comorbidities" aims to support countries in scaling up people-centred care, based on the latest WHO recommendations on TB and key comorbidities, and drawing upon additional evidence, best practices and inputs from various experts and stakeholders obtained during WHO processes.

Available here: <https://bit.ly/3ClayOX>

## Better letters – evidence and considerations from the behavioural sciences: Behavioural and Cultural Insights policy brief series



Every day, thousands of letters are sent from health authorities encouraging recipients to attend an appointment, vaccinations, cancer screening, or a health check-up, or engage in other health-related behaviours. Many of these letters have the potential to be optimized for even more impact – that is, to make people act on them. Principles from communication science can help develop better letters. In addition, this document presents evidence from the behavioural sciences, which can also help develop more impactful letters.

Available here: <https://bit.ly/3ED1nBE>

## MULTIMEDIA

- ✚ Stay up-to-date with WHO in BiH via our social media channels:  
[Facebook](#) / [X/Twitter](#)
- ✚ Explore more content on our Euro pages:  
[YouTube](#) / [Facebook](#) / [Instagram](#) / [X/Twitter](#)

## SOURCES

- <https://www.who.int/europe/home?v=welcome>
- <https://www.who.int/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/c/whoregionalofficeforeurope>

## CONTRIBUTORS

- Erwin Cooreman
- Zlatan Musić

*The Public Health Report is a publication that provides the latest updates and insights on the World Health Organization's activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European region. It covers diverse health topics, emerging trends, and pressing issues, offering valuable information for professionals as well as the public. The report highlights WHO's initiatives, achievements, and collaborative efforts to address health challenges, improve public health, and promote well-being across the region.*