

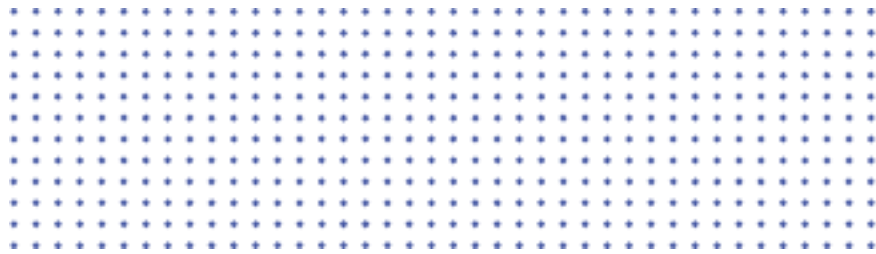


PUBLIC HEALTH REPORT

World Health Organization in Bosnia and Herzegovina

7 March 2025





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20 YEARS OF WHO FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON TOBACCO CONTROL



The world took a historic step in the fight against tobacco when the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) came into force—the first legally binding global health treaty of its kind.

Two decades later, it stands as one of the most widely ratified international agreements, with 183 Parties bound by law to safeguard public health from the grip of the tobacco epidemic. The FCTC's impact has been transformative. Seventy-five percent of its members have implemented at least some of its provisions, saving millions of lives.

Governments around the world have raised tobacco taxes and are able to point to a benchmark rate, introduced graphic health warnings and can refer to a global database of warnings, banned all forms of cigarette advertising to the extent that major social media platforms have algorithms to avoid tobacco advertisements, and treated FCTC as the minimum standard it was meant to be—for example, by passing laws that require cigarette packs to be simple and free of branding (plain packaging).

Once feared as a trigger for international trade wars, tobacco control measures have been upheld in the World Trade Organization (WTO). With the power of FCTC, the tobacco transnational's rights to its brand name and right to sue governments as foreign investors have been trumped in favour of public health.

Despite the FCTC's near-universal adoption, less than half of the Parties have implemented Article 5.3 measures to prevent industry interference. Yet, where enforced, these safeguards have proven effective, blocking tobacco-funded COVID-19 vaccines from being promoted as corporate social responsibility (CSR).

The treaty also set a global precedent for rejecting partnerships with the tobacco industry, with the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) barring tobacco companies, the International Labour Organization (ILO) cutting industry funding, and UN agencies prohibiting tobacco-linked Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) collaborations.

Read more on this [LINK](#).

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION: DEFEATING CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENT CANCER AND REDUCING GLOBAL DISPARITIES



From 13 to February 2025, the International Convention on Defeating Childhood and Adolescent Cancer and Reducing Global Disparities convened in Nicosia, Cyprus. This high-level event aimed to unite global efforts to improve cure rates and reduce disparities in pediatric oncology care worldwide.

The convention was organized through a collaboration between the World Health Organization (WHO), the Association of Friends of Children with Cancer ELPIDA (Cyprus), GFAOP (Groupe Franco-Africain d'Oncologie Pédiatrique), SIOP-E (the European branch of the International Society of Paediatric Oncology), the WHO Collaborating Centre for Childhood Cancer at St.-Jude Children's Research Hospital (Memphis, Tennessee, United States of America), and other key partners and stakeholders from Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

The event addressed significant disparities in access to life-saving therapies and support for children in low- and middle-income countries, where survival rates are notably lower compared to high-income countries. Discussions emphasized early diagnosis, equitable access to treatment, and capacity-building to ensure better support for patients and their families.

On 14 February 2025, the convention culminated in the launch of the international initiative "Cyprus Global Hope for Childhood Cancer – Bridging Gaps, Saving Lives," aiming to enhance international collaboration and innovation in pediatric oncology. This initiative seeks to ensure that every child has access to the therapies and support they need, regardless of their geographical location.

Read more on this [LINK](#).



IN THE FEDERATION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, 11 PEOPLE HAVE DIED FROM INFLUENZA COMPLICATIONS



As of 18 February 2025, complications related to influenza have resulted in 11 fatalities in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), including younger individuals belonging to high-risk groups, according to various media reports.

The highest number of reported influenza cases has been in Sarajevo Canton and Tuzla Canton. Dr Sanjin Musa, head of the Epidemiology Service for Infectious Diseases at the Public Health Institute of FBiH, noted that while most deceased individuals were over 65, there have also been several fatalities among younger people in high-risk categories.

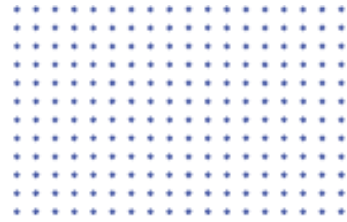
It is estimated that between 5% and 15% of the population contracts influenza during the season, equating to approximately 100,000 to 300,000 individuals in FBiH. Both influenza A and B viruses are present, with surveillance having commenced in October 2024 and set to continue until May 2025.

This period is characterized by a high intensity of respiratory viral infections, predominantly caused by the influenza virus. Since mid-January 2025, the epidemic threshold has been surpassed, indicating a high level of influenza activity, which is expected to gradually decline starting in March.

Vaccination against influenza is safe and effective, protecting against severe forms of the disease and preventing complications. Immunization is particularly recommended for high-risk groups, including individuals over 65, residents and staff of nursing homes, and chronic patients regardless of age. Pregnant women may also consider vaccination. Immunity develops within approximately 14 days post-vaccination.

The Institute of Public Health of FBiH began its influenza immunization programme in October 2024, administering over 28,200 vaccine doses since the start of the season. The ideal time for vaccination is early autumn, before the virus spreads widely, but immunization can still be beneficial later, as long as the influenza virus is circulating.

UPCOMING: INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, MARCH 8



One in four women and girls in the WHO European Region experience intimate partner violence or sexual violence in their lifetime. That's nearly 50 million women and girls.

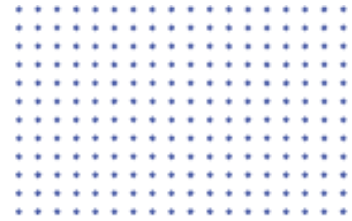
On International Women's Day, 8 March 2025, WHO/Europe will launch a special initiative to tackle gender-based violence - in which health systems and health workers play a vital role, through prevention, education, response and investment.

WHO Regional Director Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge is launching the Special Initiative on violence against women and girls (SIVAWG), as a call for health sector investments in prevention and responses to intimate partner violence or sexual violence in the Region. The main message being that gender-based violence is a public health crisis that can and should be addressed through health systems.

Watch our campaign video [HERE](#).



FROM CRADLE TO CANE: WHO'S NEW EUROPEAN HEALTH REPORT WARNS OF LIFELONG HEALTH CRISES ACROSS THE REGION



On 25 February 2025, the World Health Organization (WHO) released the European Health Report, highlighting significant health challenges across the Region. Despite historically robust health systems, Europe and Central Asia have experienced stagnation or regression in various health indicators, spanning from child and adolescent health to chronic diseases.

Child and Adolescent Health Concerns

In 2022, approximately 75,600 children under the age of five died in the WHO European Region. The leading causes of these deaths included preterm birth complications, birth asphyxia, congenital heart anomalies, lower respiratory tract infections, and neonatal sepsis. Notably, there was a substantial disparity in under-five mortality rates among countries, ranging from 1.5 to 40.4 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Additional concerns for children and adolescents encompassed mental health issues, with one in five adolescents facing mental health conditions, and suicide being the leading cause of death among individuals aged 15–29. Furthermore, 15% of adolescents reported experiencing cyberbullying, and nearly one-third of school-aged children were overweight, with one in eight living with obesity.

Rise in Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs)

The report also underscored the burden of noncommunicable diseases, noting that one in six individuals in the region died before the age of 70 due to conditions such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, or chronic respiratory diseases. Contributing factors included high tobacco use, with 25.3% prevalence, and the highest global alcohol consumption, averaging 8.8 liters of pure alcohol per adult annually. Additionally, obesity rates were on the rise, affecting a quarter of adults.

Challenges in Health Systems

The WHO report highlighted that health systems in the region were unprepared for future emergencies, grappling with the impacts of climate change, an ageing population, and staff shortages. Routine



vaccination rates have stagnated, leading to a resurgence of preventable diseases; for instance, measles cases in 2023 increased thirtyfold compared to the previous year, totaling 58,000 cases.

WHO's Call to Action

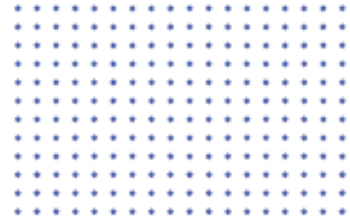
Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe, emphasized the importance of addressing these health challenges across the entire lifecycle. He stated, *"Protecting and improving child health provides dividends throughout a person's life while reducing the cost to society."* Dr Kluge also noted the demographic shift in the region, mentioning that, for the first time, there were more people aged over 65 years than under 15 years.

The WHO has initiated a comprehensive consultative process with all 53 Member States to identify priorities and actions for the next five years, using the European Health Report as a foundational evidence base. The second European Programme of Work is slated for adoption at the WHO Regional Committee for Europe session in late October, with consensus on addressing pressing health challenges such as mental health, NCDs, health security, violence against women and girls, and the health impacts of climate change.

Read more on this [LINK](#).



CHANGING MINDSETS: EMPOWER YOURSELF TO MAKE EAR AND HEARING CARE A REALITY FOR ALL!



**WORLD
HEARING
DAY**
MARCH 3RD



This year's theme of World Hearing Day – 3 March 2025 – builds upon the 2024 focus on changing mindsets towards ear and hearing care. We invite individuals of all ages to empower themselves to ensure healthy ears and hearing for themselves and others, with the theme, "Changing mindsets: empower yourself to make ear and hearing care a reality for all!"

By encouraging individuals to recognize the importance of ear and hearing health, this campaign aims to inspire them to change behaviour to protect their hearing from loud sounds and prevent hearing loss, check their hearing regularly, use hearing devices if needed, and support those living with hearing loss. Empowered individuals can drive change within themselves and in society at large.

The World Hearing Day 2025 marked the launch of:

1. WHO-International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Global standard for safe listening in video game play and sports;
2. School module on smart listening, for inclusion into educational programmes.

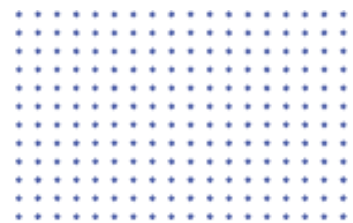
Early detection of hearing loss is crucial for its effective rehabilitation. In order to ensure that hearing loss is noticed as early as possible, all people should check their hearing from time to time, especially those at a higher risk of hearing loss. They include people who often listen to loud music, work in noisy places, use medicines that are harmful to hearing, or who are above 60 years old. In order to facilitate hearing checks, WHO has developed a mobile and web-based software application for hearing screening.

The **hearWHO app** is based on validated digits-in-noise technology. This app gives the public access to a hearing screener to check their hearing status and monitor it over time. The easy-to-use app clearly display the users' results and keeps a personalized track record of their hearing status over time.

Download the application [HERE](#).



ENHANCING PUBLIC HEALTH REPORTING WITH ESSENTIAL SKILLS



In a concerted effort to promote responsible reporting during public health crises, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of the Republika Srpska and the Institute of Public Health of the Republika Srpska, with support from the WHO Country Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina, organized a two-day workshop in February that brought together more than 50 public relations professionals from the health sector and journalists.

The participants engaged in interactive sessions, sharing experiences and strategies for effectively conveying accurate health information to the public. Case studies on immunization campaigns illustrated how misinformation can undermine public trust and the importance of proactive communication strategies.

“Accurate information saves lives. Collaboration between health institutions and media professionals is crucial in ensuring that the public receives timely, factual and actionable health information,” said Dr Erwin Cooreman, WHO Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *“By fostering responsible reporting and enhancing crisis communication skills, initiatives like this workshop contribute to a more informed and resilient society.”*

With the rise of misinformation, particularly during health crises and around immunization, the role of fact-based reporting has never been more critical. The workshop highlighted best practices in creating key messages, countering false narratives, and using social listening to address public concerns.

“In the age of digital media, I would like to point out the importance of relying on credible sources of information and scientific facts,” said Jelena Vujić, Head of the Ministry’s Department for Public Relations. *“In the conditions of increasing loss of trust, decline in the scope of immunization and infodemics, it is necessary to strengthen additional capacities as resistance to misinformation.”*

Read more [HERE](#).



WHO ANNOUNCES NEW COLLABORATING CENTRE ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR HEALTH GOVERNANCE



The World Health Organization (WHO) today designated the Digital Ethics Centre at Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands as a WHO Collaborating Centre on artificial intelligence (AI) for health governance.

AI has the potential to re-shape health care, save lives and improve health and well-being. However, harnessing its benefits for good requires collaboration from stakeholders committed to robust governance, ethical safeguards, and evidence-based policies.

The WHO Collaborating Centre designation recognizes the Digital Ethics Centre at Delft University of Technology's decades-long history of cutting-edge research on responsible innovation, and its leadership in incorporating ethical values into design requirements for digital technologies. This inauguration marks the continuation of a strong partnership between the Digital Ethics Centre and WHO with the two entities jointly organizing international consultations, workshops, and the development of normative guidance and training in the past.

“WHO is committed to helping Member States plan, govern, and adopt responsible AI technologies,” said Dr Alain Labrique, Director of Digital Health and Innovation at WHO. *“We are witnessing remarkable progress, with AI poised to transform health systems and support individuals on their health journeys. To ensure these benefits reach everyone ethically, safely, and equitably, we rely on strong technical and academic partnerships that guide us in this rapidly evolving field.”*

The Collaborating Centre on AI for health governance will be instrumental in WHO's efforts to ensure the ethical and responsible use of AI for health by advancing research on priority topics and providing expert input for WHO's guidance development and policy-making. The Centre will serve as a hub for education and advocacy for science-driven research and facilitate knowledge-sharing and training through regional and country-level workshops.

Read more [HERE](#).

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

- **WHO Factsheet on Sarcopenic Obesity in the WHO European Region: Challenges and Solutions.**
Date: 1 April 2025
Location: Online
More info: <https://bit.ly/4kxokXM>
- **How does population ageing affect health system financial sustainability and affordable access to health care?**
Date: 19 March 2025
Location: Online
More info: <https://bit.ly/3F90kr0>

WHO PODCAST

- **How to Talk to Children About Suicide**
When we hear the word suicide, many of us instinctively recoil. The word is taboo in everyday life. For family members who have lost somebody to suicide, this stigma can make grieving even more complex. People may struggle to explain the loss and how they feel about it to friends, colleagues, and other family members.

Listen here: <https://shorturl.at/c8nmJ>

PUBLICATIONS

Review

Control of HIV across the WHO European Region: progress and remaining challenges

Control of HIV across the WHO European region: progress and remaining challenges

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Summary
 Despite the ambitious global goal to control HIV transmission by 2030, more than 30% of people with HIV from the WHO European Region show persistent transmissible levels of the virus. Successful introduction of oral pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) has led to significant decreases in new HIV infections in some areas of Europe, particularly among men who have sex with men. However, the limited PrEP access or lack of state funding in many European countries underlines the need to increase efforts to make PrEP consistently and equitably available for all individuals in need. The success of modern antiretroviral therapy (ART) in reducing throughout the WHO European region, with more than 90% of treated individuals with viral suppression. Remaining barriers to control HIV include disparities in access to testing facilities, such as community-based settings, persistent high levels of low diagnostic literacy in some regions, and the need to reach underserved populations, and challenges in access to treatment. Barriers to care and maintenance of viral suppression are additional challenges. The ongoing war in Ukraine is causing serious disruption for people with HIV. Combating HIV-associated stigma and discrimination, particularly in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, seems paramount in ensuring barriers to testing and treatment, such as community-based testing, could reach wider diagnosis of HIV in transmission groups that have been difficult to reach. This review examines the barriers, opportunities and pathways towards improvement of the HIV response in the WHO European region.

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Keywords: Sustainable development goals, Testing, AIDS, Migration, HIV

Introduction
 One of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is to end HIV as a public health problem by 2030. To reduce the progress towards this contrasting goal, UNAIDS estimates require rapid to overcome, continuation of care, mortality, as well as the existing public interventions. These targets include by 2025, 90% of people at high risk of HIV acquisition and 90% of people at high risk of HIV progression are on pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and 90% of people with HIV on ART should have viral suppression. The WHO European Region (EUR) continues to be a major public health success, with an estimated 1.5 million people living with HIV in 2023. Over one-third of people with HIV in Europe and Central Asia had transmissible levels of virus in 2023, the majority living in the former region of Europe. There are two main barriers to care and maintenance of viral suppression: access to testing and care, and maintenance of viral suppression. This review examines the barriers, opportunities and pathways towards improvement of the HIV response in the WHO European region.

Despite the ambitious global goal to control HIV transmission by 2030, more than 30% of people with HIV from the WHO European Region show persistent transmissible levels of the virus. Successful introduction of oral pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) has led to significant decreases in new HIV cases in some areas of Europe, particularly among men who have sex with men. However, the limited PrEP access or lack of state funding in many European countries underlines the need to increase efforts to make PrEP consistently and equitably available for all individuals in need.

Available here: <https://bit.ly/43r9GL9>



European Health Report 2024 – Keeping Health High on the Agenda

The European Health Report is produced every three years as a flagship publication by the WHO Regional Office for Europe. This edition is based on the indicators included in the WHO European Programme of Work, 2020–2025 – “United Action for Better Health” measurement framework. This 2024 Report finds that the health of the people in the WHO European Region continues to be negatively affected by an accumulation of hard-to-tackle threats and new hazards that require our urgent attention in the aftermath of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The new European Programme of Work, which will come into effect in 2026, will be the main policy tool for the Region, outlining how WHO and the Member States will address the challenges identified in this European Health Report 2024. How the findings of the Report can inform the new European Programme of Work will be further elaborated in an accompanying evidence-for-policy action brief.

Available here: <https://bit.ly/3Xv6332>



Alcohol Health Warning Labels: A Public Health Perspective for Europe

In the WHO European Region the per capita alcohol consumption among adults (15+ years) in 2019 was twice the world average, with one in 19 adults dying from alcohol-attributable causes, and three out of every 10 alcohol-attributable deaths due to cancers. WHO endorses alcohol labelling as a policy option to reduce alcohol-related harm. This can involve providing information on packaging about alcohol content, ingredients, nutritional information and health warnings.

This report situates health warning labels within the broader context of alcohol policy, highlighting their roles in raising risk awareness, increasing support for other alcohol policies, and decreasing product appeal. The impact of these warnings will, however, depend on their content and design. The research summarized in this report shows that awareness of the link between alcohol and cancer among

Europeans needs to be improved and that it could be significantly enhanced by use of a health warning giving information about alcohol as a cause of breast and colon cancer. Compared to other topics, cancer-specific warnings are more relevant and likely to prompt discussions about alcohol risks and encourage reconsideration of alcohol consumption. The report also addresses digital information provision, concluding that it cannot replace on-label information without losing message reach.

Available here: <https://bit.ly/4ipUuIQ>



MULTIMEDIA

- ✚ Stay up-to-date with WHO in BiH via our social media channels:
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- ✚ 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

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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.