

74TH SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR EUROPE
REPORT BY THE PRESIDENT (DR ALEXANDRU RAFILA, ROMANIA)

INTRODUCTION

The 74th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe (RC74) was held in person at UN City in Copenhagen, Denmark, from 29 to 31 October 2024. The session brought together the 53 Member States of the WHO European Region with a range of health stakeholders, including civil society, partners and youth representatives. A seven-week programme of virtual side events was held in the weeks preceding the session.

Approaching the end point of the current European Programme of Work, 2020–2025, RC74 provided a unique platform to celebrate the advances made on shared priorities and to reflect on four years of impact in countries through united action for better health.

Following addresses by the WHO Director-General and Regional Director on the state of health globally and across the WHO European Region, delegations commended the efforts of WHO across the three levels for its work over the preceding 12 months including in responding to graded emergencies in the Region.

Further, the Regional Committee nominated Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge for a second term as Regional Director for Europe and requested the Director-General to propose to the Executive Board the appointment of Dr Kluge from 4 February 2025.¹

PART 1: TOPICS FOR GLOBAL DISCUSSION

Matters arising from the World Health Assembly and Executive Board

Matters arising from the 77th World Health Assembly were considered during the Regional Committee session, notably the 14th General Programme of Work (GPW 14) and the associated investment round.

Member States welcomed the adoption of the Fourteenth General Programme of Work (GPW 14) during WHA77, as well as the successful launch of the first WHO investment round noting its strategic alignment with GPW 14.

Further, The Regional Committee considered the Programme budget (PB) 2022–2023 results report, progress in implementation of the current PB2024–2025, and the draft Proposed programme budget for 2026–2027.

Participants welcomed the information on the draft Proposed programme budget for 2026–2027, which they said should provide improved and sustainable financing for WHO; reduce the reliance on short-term consultancy contracts for regular staff functions; match needs and resources more closely; make the process of prioritization and the allocation of resources to regional offices more transparent; and ensure continuous assessment of the action undertaken. They further reiterated the importance of flexible, predictable and sustainable funding, with a broader donor base, and of transparency in the budget-setting process.

¹ Resolution [EUR/RC74/R1](#).

PART 2: TOPICS OF REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Regional strategy and action plan on health emergency preparedness, response and resilience in the WHO European Region 2024–2029 (Preparedness 2.0)

The Regional Committee endorsed a regional strategy and action plan for health emergency preparedness, response and resilience in the WHO European Region 2024–2029.² The strategy places communities at the centre, recognizes “leaving no one behind” as a moral imperative and an effective public health principle, and takes an all-hazards, One Health, dual-track approach.

The Regional Committee applauded the commitment and resilience of WHO/Europe and its focus on country impact, interregional cohesion and health diplomacy. Members concurred that emergency prevention, preparedness and response needed to be further strengthened, drawing attention to the vital role of the amended International Health Regulations (2005), regional preparedness strategies, Emergency Medical Team (EMT) capacity-building and a future WHO pandemic accord.

Framework for resilient and sustainable health systems in the WHO European Region 2025–2030

The Regional Committee endorsed a framework for resilient and sustainable health systems in the WHO European Region 2025–2030.³ The framework is a synthesis of existing approaches, based on health system performance assessment, to determine transformation priorities, taking account of new issues such as climate change, emergencies and digital and social participation. It provides a tool for Member States to use in advocating for investment in health systems as a prerequisite for economic prosperity, social cohesion and stability.

The Regional Committee stressed the importance of integrated, patient-centred primary health care, innovation and digital health technology. WHO technical assistance and programmatic support for countries would be vital.

Emergency Medical Teams regional action plan 2024–2030

The Regional Committee also endorsed the EMT regional action plan 2024–2030.⁴ The regional action plan is intended to develop national EMT capacities and integrate EMTs into national health systems, thereby strengthening national capacity as well as providing assistance to other countries, particularly in the fields of data-sharing, digitalization and quality improvement. Activities under the plan will be coordinated by the WHO Regional European EMT Capabilities Hub in Istanbul, Türkiye.

Harnessing innovation for public health in the WHO European Region 2025–2030: preparing for a new strategy

Advances in technology, such as GLP-1 receptor agonists, mRNA technologies, artificial intelligence, precision medicine and genomics, are disrupting traditional clinical practice, yet remain underutilized in public health. The Regional Committee unanimously supported the initiative of developing a new strategy on harnessing innovation for public health. The new strategy will create national governance and coordination mechanisms to reform intellectual property laws; promote multistakeholder partnerships and build public trust;

² Decision [EUR/RC74/5](#).

³ Decision [EUR/RC74/4](#).

⁴ Decision [EUR/RC74/6](#).

enhance country capacities; promote long-term financing commitments and the integration of innovation costs into national health budgets; and develop systems to monitor the impact of health innovations.

Members welcomed the strong emphasis placed by WHO/Europe on equity, collaboration, ethics, safety, sustainability and behavioural and cultural insights in innovation policies. Digital health was seen as an essential tool for improving accessibility and resilience in health care.

High-level technical briefing on One Health

During the Regional Committee session, a high-level technical briefing on One Health was convened during which a regional adaptation guide was launched. This enables Member States to tailor their strategies to implement a One Health approach that suits their specific contexts and addresses country challenges and gaps in health. It introduces 6 regional priorities:

- building and strengthening governance, leadership and partnerships;
- strengthening prevention and preparedness capacities;
- promoting and supporting equitable, inclusive and sustainable solutions to tackle inequalities;
- building evidence on the effectiveness of One Health through data and research;
- facilitating the allocation of sustainable financing; and
- cultivating and sustaining core competencies in the One Health approach for the health workforce and other workforces.

The briefing also saw the launch of WHO/Europe's first collaborating centre on One Health.

Governance and leadership matters

With the objectives of enhancing transparency and accountability, and supporting participatory governance, the 2024 WHO/Europe Accountability Report was presented which provided Member States with a picture of how WHO/Europe is managed, led and governed, including efforts to: increase focus on countries and country outcomes; improve financial sustainability and management; support staff health and well-being; prevent sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment; bolster partnerships; enhance engagement with non-State actors; and ensure effective, efficient governing body meetings.

Member States welcomed the continued development of the report since its introduction in 2023 and provided guidance on its further enhancement for the future.

Further, the first-ever WHO/Europe Country Impact Report was considered which showcases real-life examples of collaboration in each of the 53 Member States and was also the theme of the RC74 exhibition which showcased examples of collaboration from the report.

Progress reports

The Regional Committee took note of progress reports on the following topics:

- Leveraging digital transformation for better health in Europe: Regional digital health action plan for the WHO European Region 2023–2030
- Establishment of a new geographically dispersed office (GDO) for primary health care in Kazakhstan

- European regional action framework for behavioural and cultural insights for equitable health, 2022–2027

= = =