

**75TH SESSION OF THE WHO REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR EUROPE (COPENHAGEN,
DENMARK, 28-30 OCTOBER 2025)
REPORT BY THE CHAIR (MS MARTINE DEPREZ, LUXEMBOURG)**

INTRODUCTION

The 75th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe (RC75) was held in Copenhagen in an in-person format, consistent with the Standing Committee's earlier recommendation to proceed with a reduced-cost, scaled-back physical meeting in light of WHO/Europe's financial constraints.

The session gathered all 53 Member States of the Region alongside partners, regional networks, non-State actors and observers. All proceedings were conducted in accordance with the applicable Rules of Procedure.

A series of pre-RC75 virtual side events organized over a six-week period (2 September-10 October 2025) engaged in total nearly 1,000 stakeholders across Member States, partners, and health experts, focusing on strengthening quality of care, health security, antimicrobial resistance accountability, NCD commitments, and workforce mental health.

PART 1: TOPICS FOR GLOBAL DISCUSSION

Matters arising from the World Health Assembly and Executive Board

Matters arising from the 78th World Health Assembly were considered during the Regional Committee session, with a focus on their implications for the European Region. In her statement to the Regional Committee, the Vice-Chair of the Executive Board from Norway, serving as the formal link between the Board and the Standing Committee of the Regional Committee (SCRC), provided an overview of WHA78 outcomes and the decisions taken at EB157 that would shape regional implementation.

She highlighted that the Health Assembly had adopted a significantly reduced and more realistic programme budget for 2024–2025, approved the WHO Pandemic Agreement, and endorsed the increase in assessed contributions, all within the context of one of the most challenging financial periods in WHO's history.

Member States stressed that global decisions, particularly those concerning pandemic preparedness, digital transformation, infodemic management and strengthened accountability, must be matched with realistic regional resource planning and transparent monitoring. The Committee reaffirmed its strong support for WHO's multilateral mandate and the need for WHO/Europe to remain a science-driven, people-centred and financially sustainable partner capable of contributing substantively to global deliberations.

PART 2: TOPICS OF REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Second European Programme of Work, 2026–2030 – "United Action for Better Health" (EPW2)

EPW2 was the central outcome of RC75 and was adopted unanimously. The result of an unprecedented co-creation process involving all 53 Member States and over 5,000

stakeholders, EPW2 defines five priority areas and introduces two special initiatives: on primary health care and on tackling violence against women and girls, the latter officially launched by the Regional Director on the first day of RC75.

EPW2's structure, distinguishing critical, resource-contingent and supportive activities, was welcomed as a practical approach to align ambitions with WHO/Europe's financial realities. The Committee reaffirmed that EPW2 represents a shared commitment to reimagining WHO/Europe as an agile, trusted and impact-driven institution capable of responding to contemporary megatrends, including ageing populations, climate pressures, disinformation, digital transformation and health inequities.

A Strategy for Child and Adolescent Health and Well-being 2026–2030

The Regional Committee adopted a comprehensive strategy developed jointly by WHO/Europe and UNICEF. Built on wide consultations, including contributions from more than 3,000 young people, the strategy emphasizes early investment and a strong life-course approach. The strategy's four pillars: early years investment, protection from harms, high-quality care and multisectoral collaboration, were broadly supported. Particular praise was given to its detailed focus on digital safety, mental health, and age-appropriate, inclusive service models, as well as its intention to ensure strong continuity between the health and education sectors. The Committee recognized the strategy as essential for shaping resilient societies and mitigating future NCD burdens.

Strategy on Harnessing Innovation for Public Health 2025–2030

The Regional Committee adopted the Region's first dedicated public health innovation strategy. Member States acknowledged the widening innovation implementation gap and the need for more systematic approaches to scaling up effective solutions. The strategy proposes integrated innovation governance, improved financing mechanisms, country capacity-building, horizon scanning and collaborative platforms. Discussions highlighted the importance of equitable access to innovations, ethical and secure use of digital technologies, and stronger engagement between public authorities and innovation ecosystems. Member States agreed that innovation must extend beyond technologies to include service redesign, task-shifting and new models of care. WHO/Europe's convening role was strongly emphasized.

Draft Strategy on Healthy Ageing 2026–2030

The Secretariat presented an initial outline of a future strategy addressing ageing across the life course, to be further developed ahead of RC76. Member States welcomed its twin-track approach, both promoting healthy ageing from early life and improving the well-being of current older populations. They stressed the importance of age-friendly health systems, integrated long-term care, dementia-inclusive environments and support for informal carers. Many emphasized that older persons' dignity, rights and social participation must underpin the strategy. They also highlighted the relevance of digital tools and AI in enabling independent living. The Committee agreed on the need for robust technical guidance, cross-country learning and sustained partnership with UNFPA and other actors.

Programme Budget matters

The Regional Committee reviewed implementation of the current biennium's programme budget and the outlook for 2026–2027. Member States commended the Secretariat's decisive action to reduce the salary gap, rationalize operations, and embed efficiencies such as travel restrictions, streamlined procurement and workforce realignment. They acknowledged that the structural funding imbalance, marked by low levels of flexible financing and high reliance on a small number of donors, posed significant risks to core functions. Calls were made to diversify donors, expand multi-year flexible contributions and strengthen accountability mechanisms.

Member States expressed strong solidarity with WHO/Europe staff affected by restructuring and emphasized the importance of a respectful workplace, staff well-being and fairness throughout the transition.

The Secretariat's application of AI tools to streamline internal processes was recognized as a promising step toward longer-term financial sustainability.

Governance and partnerships matters

The Regional Committee welcomed the third edition of the WHO/Europe Accountability Report, introduced at RC73, recognizing it as a significant tool for enhancing transparency and participatory governance. Members appreciated the increased visibility of the Standing Committee's work and encouraged more active dissemination. The commitment to digital workplace modernization, data-driven management and strengthened partnerships were acknowledged as vital to the Region's future readiness.

Member States reiterated their support for the Regional Director's leadership during the financial crisis and stressed the importance of maintaining trust through open communication, performance monitoring and continuous improvement of governance mechanisms.

The Committee also considered business cases for proposed GDOs on artificial intelligence, health and the well-being economy, and quality of care and patient safety, with further consideration to be given at RC76.

High-level technical briefing on climate and health

In the context of the work of the independent Pan-European Commission on Climate and Health, a high-level technical briefing was hosted on Day 1 of RC75.

The purpose of the session was to present the work of the to date and engage heads of delegations in an interactive discussion to inform the recommendations of the Commission in 2026.

Progress reports

The Regional Committee took note of nine progress reports under Pillars 1, 3 and 4, and which can be found on the RC75 official webpage.

Conclusion

Throughout its deliberations, the Regional Committee emphasized the importance of unity, solidarity and strategic foresight in navigating a period of significant instability.

Member States underscored the importance of safeguarding staff well-being during this period of significant organizational change and transformation, emphasizing that a resilient, motivated workforce is essential for maintaining WHO/Europe's technical excellence and operational stability.

The Chair acknowledged the strong engagement of Member States and partners and reaffirmed the shared responsibility to implement the decisions taken at RC75.

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