



**Partners Forum – United Action for
Better Health in Europe
Istanbul, Türkiye
13-14 June 2023**

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Scope and purpose

The WHO Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe) is convening a first-of-its-kind Partners Forum in Istanbul, Türkiye for leading health funders from across Europe, the Caucasus and central Asia. For one-and-a-half days, over 100 representatives will come together to enhance our public health partnerships via a series of panel discussions and presentations on the key health and well-being challenges being faced across the region.

Background

“The pandemic also taught us a very important lesson – coordinated action and solidarity are, in fact, the only way to face and ultimately overcome health challenges. Partnership is not merely a matter of good will; it is an ethical duty and a prerequisite to making progress on our shared goals. Through united action, the European Region has been able to build stronger health- and social-care systems, even amid a global pandemic, and make remarkable strides towards a future economy of well-being” (Hans Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe).

Over the last two years, COVID-19 has upended our world. It uncovered flaws in the international system and further stalled progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition, as of 24 February 2022, Europe has been faced with the direct consequences of the Ukraine crisis, which has generated enormous health challenges for the Ukrainian people, including those that have fled to other countries, especially those directly bordering Ukraine.

More than ever, WHO/Europe is committed to strengthening its partnerships, and to mobilizing a wider range of expertise and diverse perspectives to better understand health and well-being issues and address them together, under the architecture of the [European Programme of Work, 2020–2025 – “United Action for Better Health in Europe” \(EPW\)](#), which was adopted by the 53 Member States at the 70th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe in September 2020.

The three ambitious goals of the EPW – (i) moving towards universal health coverage (UHC), (ii) protecting people better against health emergencies, and (iii) ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages – have not yet been achieved. However, the current spotlight on public health opens a window of opportunity to firmly anchor health on the political agenda for the long term and give a much-needed boost to getting back on track towards achieving our common goals.

Most of WHO/Europe’s funds come from a handful of partners, and only about a third of the funding can be considered sustainable. Over time, a growing proportion of earmarked funds has made WHO vulnerable to fluctuations and has undermined its capacity to respond to growing health threats. An increasing reliance on these types of contributions has resulted in pockets of

poverty in critical areas such as noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), mental health and sexual and reproductive health.

Objectives and scope

Taking advantage of the current momentum around public health, the Forum will provide a platform to consider a wide range of expertise and perspectives, to explore genuine opportunities for sustainable health funding across the region, and ultimately to strengthen partnerships, both new and well-established, across the European and central Asian region.

Specifically, the Forum aims to provide a platform to achieve the following:

- Examine challenges and opportunities for enhanced partnership within regional country contexts.
- Identify critical thematic and subregional funding gaps relevant to the successful implementation of the EPW.
- Explore anticipated resource requirements for WHO/Europe's most prominent regional emergency responses.

Agenda summary

Day 1 (13:00–17:00)

1. Welcome remarks by the WHO Regional Director for Europe
2. Public health challenges and unmet needs in Europe and central Asia
3. The power of partnerships in public health impact in Europe and central Asia: High-level panel discussion
4. Special session: Health partnerships during the Ukraine crisis

Day 2 (09:00–16:30)

1. Showcasing WHO/Europe's work and ambition: Moving towards universal health coverage
2. Showcasing WHO/Europe's work and ambition: Protecting people better against health emergencies
3. Showcasing WHO/Europe's work and ambition: Ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages
4. Wrap up: Journey towards sustainable health partnerships in Europe and central Asia

Format

The Partners Forum will take place at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Istanbul Sisli in Istanbul, Türkiye and will be organized through plenary sessions, with breakout rooms available for ad hoc discussions upon request. A marketplace-style session will also take place, providing participants with an informal setting in which to discuss challenges and opportunities at country level.

Participants

Participants will include representatives of Member States and organizations that are WHO/Europe's resource partners; and WHO/Europe Country Office and Regional Office staff.