

## Area 3. Healthy settings networks

The Venice Office hosts two important healthy settings networks: the Small Countries Initiative (SCI) and the Regions for Health Network (RHN). Such networks allow:

- technical assistance to be provided to member countries, at both national and subnational levels, thus being cost-effective and complementing bilateral technical assistance;
- best practices to be identified (within the pool of member countries belonging to such networks), along with pioneering examples and innovative mechanisms translating WHO policies and strategies; such practices can be analysed, and knowledge synthesized and made available to other members of the networks and to the WHO European Region at large (networks = repository of practical know-how);
- implementation of WHO policies and strategies to be boosted, by facilitating the uptake of best practices elsewhere (including scaling up);
- the evidence base for the implementation of WHO policies and strategies to be broadened by offering concrete examples on how to move from theory to practice (organizational learning through existing practices);
- technical capacity at country and subnational levels to be strengthened, not only through WHO technical assistance, but also through peer-to-peer learning (members learning from each another);
- collaboration to be intensified between countries at both national and subnational levels, particularly where WHO country offices do not exist (e.g. in the western part of the Region) or in settings with a high level of decentralization of health governance;
- direct collaboration across countries and regions to be facilitated, through projects and agreements aiming to improve populations' health;
- the buy-in of stakeholders who are essential levers of change for WHO policies to be increased, at both national and subnational levels of governance within countries.

### Achievements with healthy settings platforms

During WHO's 13th General Programme of Work period (GPW13), the RHN and the SCI intend to become the most prominent technical networks globally for promoting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at subnational level and within the small countries. They aim to achieve this by:

- identifying, documenting, and disseminating best practices in how the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is implemented;
- functioning as a vast repository of practical know-how;
- being a dynamic platform for peer-to-peer learning;
- being an essential hub for dissemination of WHO policies at global and regional levels;
- proposing cutting-edge tools for strengthening technical capacity relating to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- contributing to creating a critical mass of professionals (in both the health and non-health sectors) who are enthusiastic about promoting WHO principles, core values and proposed strategies, policies and plans.

### The Venice Office as a geographically dispersed office (GDO): an integral part of the WHO Regional Office for Europe

The GDO, aptly located in Venice – an iconic city for the history of global public health – seeks to fulfil its mission through the following key strategies.

#### Programmatic focus

The strategic priorities (social and economic determinants of health and health equity; investment for health and development) are fully aligned with the Venice Office core mandate to be a centre of excellence for health promotion in the 21st century, empowering people to increase control over – and to improve – their health.

#### Knowledge hub for innovation and capacity-building

As a centre of excellence and learning institution, and drawing on and feeding into the expertise of WHO Regional Office for Europe divisions and global WHO Programme Area Networks, the Venice Office and its dynamic network of key international experts and WHO collaborating centres provides a platform for review and discussion, and synthesizes evidence to advance innovations in areas identified as priorities for transformative changes related to its core mandate.

#### Local action and country focus

People-centred health promotion and participatory governance in multi- and intersectoral interventions at all levels of health policy-making and administration are addressed through actions which reflect the complexity of interactions and responsibilities of good governance in a globalized world. This requires a strong country focus at national and subnational levels, with the latter using the healthy settings approach (such as the RHN), while at the same time acting on the international dimensions of health challenges through multi-country (such as the SCI), subregional, regional and global initiatives.

#### Partnerships

The Venice Office is building on its strong relationship with the Italian Government and the Veneto Region, which are its core supporters, as well as seeking support from Member States in programme areas related to its core mandate. Focusing on health promotion through HiAP also requires close relations with other United Nations and multilateral agencies, at both regional and country levels. Beyond that, the Venice Office is actively engaging with other public and private sector organizations within the mandate provided by the WHO Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors (FENSA).

The WHO Regional Office for Europe

The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations created in 1948 with the primary responsibility for international health matters and public health. The WHO Regional Office for Europe is one of six regional offices throughout the world, each with its own programme geared to the particular health conditions of the countries it serves.

#### Member States

Albania  
Andorra  
Armenia  
Austria  
Azerbaijan  
Belarus  
Belgium  
Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Bulgaria  
Croatia  
Cyprus  
Czechia  
Denmark  
Estonia  
Finland  
France  
Georgia  
Germany  
Greece  
Hungary  
Iceland  
Ireland  
Israel  
Italy  
Kazakhstan  
Kyrgyzstan  
Latvia  
Lithuania  
Luxembourg  
Malta  
Monaco  
Montenegro  
Netherlands  
Norway  
Poland  
Portugal  
Republic of Moldova  
Romania  
Russian Federation  
San Marino  
Serbia  
Slovakia  
Slovenia  
Spain  
Sweden  
Switzerland  
Tajikistan  
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia  
Turkey  
Turkmenistan  
Ukraine  
United Kingdom  
Uzbekistan

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### WHO European Office for Investment for Health and Development

Ospedale Ss. Giovanni e Paolo,  
Castello 6777, 30122 Venice, Italy  
Tel.: +39 041 279 3865  
E-mail: [whovenice@who.int](mailto:whovenice@who.int)  
E-mail: [euwhocontact@who.int](mailto:euwhocontact@who.int)



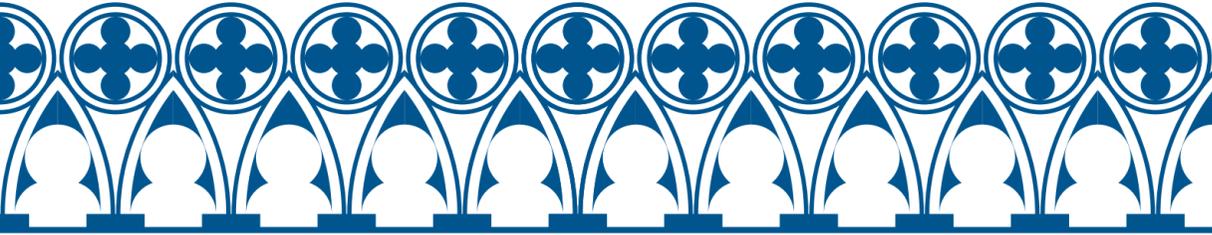
European Office for Investment  
for Health and Development  
Venice, Italy

## The WHO European Office for Investment for Health and Development in a nutshell



World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe  
UN City, Marmorvej 51, DK-2100 Copenhagen Ø, Denmark  
Tel.: +45 45 33 70 00 Fax: +45 45 33 70 01  
Email: [euwhocontact@who.int](mailto:euwhocontact@who.int)  
Website: [www.euro.who.int](http://www.euro.who.int)





## Area 1. Social determinants of health (SDH) and health equity

### Introduction

The WHO European Office for Investment for Health and Development, based in Venice, Italy (hereinafter referred to as the Venice Office), is the centre of excellence of the WHO Regional Office for Europe in the thematic areas of **social and economic determinants of health, health equity and investment for health**. The mandate of the centre focuses on principles of equity, promotion of investment for health and the safeguarding of human and gender rights.

The Venice Office aims to generate and disseminate cutting-edge knowledge and to assist Member States of the WHO European Region by building strong partnerships and networks with governments, the public and private sectors, academia and various think tanks, as well as a broad range of civil society stakeholders. The Venice Office was established in 2003 through a Memorandum of Agreement between the Government of Italy – represented by the national Ministry of Health and the Veneto Region – and the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

The 62nd session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe (held in Malta on 10–13 September 2012) marked the endorsement – by all 53 WHO European Region Member States – of Health 2020, a new political and strategic framework for health and well-being. This framework not only provides a European platform to strengthen and systematize the knowledge about health and its determinants, but it also outlines the areas in which WHO offers technical assistance and support to decision- and policy-makers.

Health 2020 highlights the long-established areas of work of the Venice Office; first and foremost dedicated to **providing technical support** to Member States in fostering their capacity to intervene in **reducing health inequities**. As such, the Venice Office positions itself as the core player in achieving two strategic objectives included in Health 2020; namely, **improving the health of all people**, while reducing health inequalities and **promoting governance** for health, systematically.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its various elements certainly helps to maintain the momentum of this approach; the 2030 Agenda serves as reference and guidance for the achievement of health conditions that are better, more equitable and more sustainable for all people living in the Region.

The programme of work of the Venice Office covers three interconnected areas.



Where we live, work and learn shapes our health and well-being throughout life. Our housing, as well as the local neighbourhood facilities and safety; having access to green spaces, job opportunities and decent work; together with a sense of belonging, social networks, education and learning all make up the essential conditions needed for people to be able to live a healthy life in Europe today.

Alongside these conditions, high-quality health services and prevention against the risk of impoverishment (in early years, working life or later years) help to promote social mobility, support economic and social resilience, and enable individuals, families and whole communities to thrive.

The Health Equity and SDH Programme of the Venice office is working with policy-makers, practitioners, third-sector organizations, networks and research communities, in order to:

- implement and evaluate multisectoral policies for health and equity;
- produce evidence, arguments and practical tools that make the investment case for health's contribution to economic and social development;
- monitor progress in reducing gaps in health within countries;
- convene stakeholders for advocacy and action on the determinants of health inequities at both European and country levels;
- build capacities of the health sector to influence and partner with other sectors – putting health in all policies (HiAP) into practice.

#### Achievements in SDH and health equity

**1 Direct support to countries to implement and evaluate multisectoral policies for health and equity.** The *WHO Venice Office Health Equity/SDH Programme* provides tailored policy support to countries to design, implement and evaluate multisectoral policies for health and health equity. Between 2014 and 2017, direct support has been provided to 13 Member States across the Region.

**2 Flagship initiatives.** The *equity in Health in All Policies (eHiAP) Flagship Course* addresses the demand from WHO European Member States to develop and shape intersectoral policies; specifically to influence and partner with other sectors – putting HiAP into practice. To date participants from 16 Member States (33% of all WHO European Region Member States) have participated in the Flagship Course, which has been running since 2015. Five countries (30% of participants) have adapted the course and are using it to cascade training as part of mainstreaming services and continuing professional education for cross-sectoral and public health planners and policy-makers. In 2018/19 two further Flagship Courses covering 8 Member States are planned. In 2019 an advanced Flagship Course will be launched.

**3 The Health Equity Status Report (HESR) Initiative** is producing a first ever WHO Regional Office for Europe Regional Atlas of Health Equity Status within countries and a status report on policy progress to increase equity in health. These will directly support WHO, Member States and

Partners to better target resources and actions to reduce gaps in health and well-being through strengthening health sector responses and through multisectoral policies. A suite of online interactive tools are being launched to guide decision-makers and practitioners in selecting the most effective policy options and interventions that work at the national and local levels to increase equity in health at key stages across the life-course.

**4 Supporting dialogue between the health, and finance and economy sectors: how the health sector contributes to resilient communities and inclusive economies.** *The Health System Social and Economic Footprint Initiative.* The WHO Venice Office *Health Equity/SDH Programme* has developed a new methodology that allows a country to calculate the contribution (GDP, jobs, and household consumption) of the health sector to the national and subnational (regional) economies. The methodology has been used in Slovenia and England and is being translated into an online tool that all countries can access and use.

**5 Making health a goal and an investment sector in regional growth and development strategies.** *The SEE2020 Growth Strategy and the South-Eastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN).* A high priority of the governments of all member countries is economic growth and social sustainability. The Venice Office has been working intensively to support the health ministries and public health organizations of the SEEHN to ensure health is included in the regional growth and development strategy SEE2020. The Venice Office was the main partner supporting the SEEHN in using evidence to make the case for investing in health for growth with regional economic and development organizations. This contributed to health targets and measures being formally included in the SEE2020 Growth Strategy and formally endorsed by all ministers of economy of the western Balkan countries and those of south-eastern Europe.

**6 Multi-country alliances for health equity.** *The Nordic–Baltic Health 2020 Social Determinants and Health Equity Collaboration* is an ongoing collaboration between Nordic and Baltic states (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden) and the WHO Regional Office for Europe. The Collaboration has been active since its launch in Helsinki in June 2014 and supports governments and societies by providing politicians and policy-makers with the opportunity for a subregional learning exchange on emerging evidence, policy experiences and good practices. In December 2016, Sweden hosted a three-day policy exchange which brought together over 100 policy-makers from health, development, and welfare fields, alongside private institutions, social economy and academic experts to enrich the European knowledge base, as well as commitment to act to increase equity in health. The event was co-chaired by the Minister of Health of Sweden and the WHO Regional Director for Europe, Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab. In 2019 Lithuania will host the next three-day policy exchange.

**7 Evidence and support tools for policy-makers.** There is continuing demand for evidence-informed tools and resources to support decision-makers to implement policies and approaches that will reduce socially determined health

inequities. Guidance focuses on the evidence and practical options for working on policies dealing with social protection, income and taxation, family and community, education, and employment and working conditions. In parallel, the tools include case studies, syntheses of promising practices and lessons learned.

**8** Between 2014 and 2017 a total of **14 resources have been launched and are being used** by countries and partners. Resources include guidance on policy options, implementation approaches and governance mechanisms that can support the health sector and wider government to tackle social inequities in health.

## Area 2. Investment approaches for health and well-being

The WHO European Office for Investment for Health and Development was founded based on the understanding that promoting and protecting health, preventing and treating diseases and related care and support services constitute investment, rather than purely costs, with a high social and economic value as a return.

As a centre of excellence, the Venice Office is leading and coordinating WHO's effort in the European Region to:

- synthesize evidence about the social return on investment for health and well-being across all components of the investment framework, covering the continuum of health promotion and protection, prevention of disease, treatment, rehabilitation, care and support;
- make available tools and expertise for the advocacy and application of investment approaches for health and well-being at both national and subnational levels;
- support policy and strategy development, as well as implementation at regional and national levels in the context of the WHO European Roadmap to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This will build on Health 2020 through evidence-based investment strategies, highlighting the bi-directional relationship of

health and development through health and economic dividends.

#### Achievements using investment approaches for health and well-being

The life-course approach suggests that the health outcomes of individuals and the community depend on the interaction of multiple protective and risk factors throughout people's lives, particularly during the early years. Building on this premise, the Venice Office has made strong contributions to the synthesis of evidence on social returns on investment in public health policies, as well as to the advancements of social return on investment concepts in the context of Health 2020 and the 2030 Agenda. These contributions shaped regional strategies, such as the WHO European Roadmap to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development, building on Health 2020, and are in increasing demand, both at national level – for example, in Italy, Poland, Slovenia and Montenegro (including in the context of advancing the agenda of health, and inclusive and sustainable growth) – and at subnational level (e.g. in regions and cities).

