

**“FURTHER STEPS TO STRENGTHENING THE SEE REGIONAL
COLLABORATION FOR PUBLIC HEALTH”**

21-23 June 2015, Belgrade, Republic of Serbia

THE BELGRADE STATEMENT

PREAMBLE

The Ministers of Health¹ of the Members States of the South Eastern Europe (SEE) Health Network jointly called and organized an Ad hoc Ministerial meeting with the Regional Director of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, hosted by the Minister of Health of the Republic of Serbia, current President of the SEE Health Network.

2014 and 2015 have been and will be extremely intensive years for the regional collaboration for health, particularly with regards to the implementation of the Banja Luka Pledge (2011), the SEE 2020 Strategy Jobs and Prosperity in a European Prospective, recently endorsed (22 November 2013) by the SEE Ministers of Economy, and embedding health as separate dimension contributing to the economic development and growth, based on the SEE Health Network action; the EU 2020 Strategy and the WHO Europe Health 2020 Policy Framework (2012) as well as the European Action Plan for Strengthening Public Health Capacities and Services (2012).

Because of the above and in view of the current political, economic, social and health changes that

¹ Throughout this document, Minister of Civil Affairs on behalf of the Bosnia and Herzegovina's health authorities shall be understood as Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Federal Ministry of Health of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of the Republika Srpska and Department of Health and other services of Brcko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina

SEE HEALTH NETWORK MEMBER STATES



PARTNERS



have taken place in the region since the endorsement of the SEE Health Network Memorandum of Understanding in 2008 and its amendments from 2011, it was of utmost importance that the Ministerial meeting was conducted in order to provide for strengthened leadership, managerial and technical opportunities for the Network and the regional cooperation in public health in SEE to develop further.

The countries of SEE have shown recent improvements in health, but gaps exist in opportunity to be healthy and in risk of illness. These have negative consequences in terms of the capacities of individuals, families and communities to realize their social, economic and human potential, particularly in comparison to the European Union (EU) Member States.

Today, the burden of non-communicable diseases (NCD) represents the predominant health challenge in the region. In addition, countries face demographic changes that affect both health and the health systems, such as international, cross border and internal migration, ageing population, and migration of the health work force.

Ministers of Health of the SEE Health Network Member States, at this Ministerial meeting:

- Exchanged views, experience and lessons learned on the top common priorities of the SEE Health Network Member States related to the on-going health systems and public health services reforms in times of budgetary pressures and to agreeing on joint regional and national² actions aiming towards securing universal health coverage;
- Reaffirmed the political commitment to the sub-regional collaboration in the SEE;
- Exchanged and discussed health reforms in the light of WHO European Policy Framework for health and wellbeing – Health 2020;
- Further extended their collaboration and identified common aims for the countries' progress in population health and wellbeing toward, also in line with the SEE2020 strategy “Jobs and Prosperity in a European Perspective”; and
- Followed-up to the topics and agreed actions in follow-up to the Skopje Statement, approved by the Extraordinary Ministerial Meeting on 18 November 2014, held under the past Presidency of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, on the important issues for strengthening human resources in health, and cross-border support in public health emergencies.

Ministers of Health of the SEE Health Network Member States,

- Have acknowledged the leading role of WHO Regional Director for Europe, Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab as the honoured partner at this very important meeting, is in line with the continuous support of the WHO Europe as the founding partner in the process of the SEE Health Network's

² For Bosnia and Herzegovina, the term “national” in health sector encompasses all constituencies of Bosnia and Herzegovina with their legally defined competences/jurisdictions, represented by the health authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which include Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ministry of Health of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of the Republika Srpska and Department of Health and Other Services of Brcko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina

establishing, development and functioning, as well as in line with the common Health 2020 goals of improving the health and well-being of the populations, reducing health inequalities and strengthening public health.

- Have further acknowledged the important role, for strengthening the public health in the SEE and Europe, of the SEE Health Network partners: the Regional Cooperation Council, the Council of Europe, the Council of Europe Development Bank, the UNFPA, the EuroHealthNet, the IOM, the NDPHS, the SEENWH, Studiorum, the International Network of HPH, the Project Hope, the EHFG and the ECPD.

Having regards the above stated, Ministers of Health of the SEE Health Network have endorsed the following

BELGRADE STATEMENT

We, Ministers of Health of the SEE Health Network Member States of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the State of Israel, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Republic of Serbia, hereby express political commitment to the sub-regional collaboration in public health in the SEE:

1. To further promote and scale up the political commitment for implementation of the WHO European Policy Framework for health and wellbeing – Health 2020, within SEE Health Network countries;
 2. To further extend their collaboration in line with the SEE 2020 strategy “Jobs and Prosperity in a European Perspective”;
 3. To strengthen political commitment in the SEE Health Network countries for intergovernmental and intersectoral collaboration **and to demonstrate this political commitment in its continued work with the WHO, Regional Office for Europe;**
 4. To aim towards people centred health systems through the transformation of health service delivery and public health services, and securing universal health coverage aiming for an **equitable** Europe free of impoverishing health expenditures. This includes scaling up the health promoting services for noncommunicable diseases, prevention and control, with a particular focus on the vulnerable population groups and creating resilient communities but also transforming the health workforce, ensuring access and the rational use of medicines and health technologies and health information;
 5. In follow-up the Skopje Statement, to agree on more specific regional actions for addressing strengthening human resources in health, and coordinating cross-border support in public health
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emergencies;

6. To further enhance SEE Health Network governance, at both political and technical level, and especially in the view of equipping the SEE Health Network Secretariat with adequate managerial, technical, financial and administrative capacity;
7. To invest in the partnerships for health, for the benefit of the SEE Health Network populations; and
8. To strengthen current partnerships, based on mutually agreed and compatible programs of work.

Done in Belgrade, Serbia, 22 June, 2015

