



**South-eastern Europe Health Network**  
***Health Development Action for South-eastern Europe***

**Twelfth Meeting of  
Senior Government Officials of Countries  
in South-eastern Europe**

Report on a Joint Council of Europe/WHO meeting  
Skopje, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 24–26 November 2005



**STABILITY PACT**  
FOR SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE



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## **Introduction**

The Twelfth Meeting of Senior Government Officials of Countries in South-eastern Europe was held in three parts, before the Second Health Ministers' Forum for South-eastern Europe (to deal with last-minute issues in connection with the preparation of the Forum), during the Forum (to deal with issues arising during the Forum) and immediately after the end of the Forum (to evaluate and implement the conclusions of the Forum).

The Secretariat (Council of Europe) organized the Meeting, and Snezana Cicevalieva (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) chaired it. Annex 1 lists the participants of the Meeting.

## **Session 1**

The Health Network agreed with the proposal of the Operational Task Force regarding the officers to be proposed for election at the Second Health Ministers' Forum:

- Vladimir Dimov, Minister of Health of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as overall Chairperson;
- Maksim Cikuli, Minister of Health of Albania, Neven Ljubicic, Minister of Health and Social Welfare of Croatia and Nikola Popovski, Minister of Finance of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as Co-Chairpersons;
- Goran Cerkez, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Djordje Stojiljkovic as rapporteurs.

The Health Network reviewed with satisfaction the level of participation at the Second Health Ministers' Forum as well as the large number of countries and organizations represented. It noted in particular the participation of a representative of the European Commission.

Regarding the Skopje Pledge, no issues were raised either with respect to the text or to its signature.

The Health Network was informed of the press arrangements: two press conferences – the first after the opening session and the second after the Second Health Ministers' Forum. The final press release will be coordinated between the co-organizers and then distributed to all Health Network members for translation into local languages and appropriate dissemination. The Secretariat will also provide the final text of the Skopje Pledge as well as photographs.

## **Session 2**

This session was entirely devoted to an advance presentation by the delegation from Norway of a proposal they will make at the Second Health Ministers' Forum, for the Health Network and the health ministers to initiate a new project devoted to reducing neonatal mortality in the region. The delegation from Norway presented data on the possible significant impact of such a project in the Region and indicated that it was ready to provide political, technical and financial support. It asked that members of the Health Network inform and prepare their respective ministers and heads of delegations. If health ministers support the idea during the Second Health Ministers'

Forum, an expert group comprising experts from each country in south-eastern Europe, Norway, the WHO Regional Office for Europe and perhaps WHO headquarters will meet and start defining the project.

The initial reaction of the Health Network was very positive, and it was even suggested that the Republic of Moldova, which is not currently leading a project, take the leadership of this project.

### **Session 3**

The preliminary summary report of the Second Health Ministers' Forum prepared by the rapporteurs was distributed to be used as appropriate, with the understanding that the final report of the Second Health Ministers' Forum, to be made available within a few weeks, might introduce revisions to this summary.

The meeting was informed that the *Health and economic development in south-eastern Europe* still requires scientific and text editing as well as peer review. The WHO Regional Office for Europe and the Council of Europe Development Bank are arranging this. It is expected to be published in 2006.

A discussion took place regarding the future meetings of the Health Network following the adoption by the Second Health Ministers' Forum of the Skopje Pledge and the Statutes of the Health Network. In particular, Albania should chair the first six-month presidency of the Health Network starting in January 2006 based on alphabetical order. Albania indicated that it was not ready to assume this task immediately, and the members of the Health Network were invited to communicate to the Secretariat within two weeks if their respective countries would be ready to assume this presidency. The country that will be invited to take the presidency will be selected in alphabetical order. Independently of which country agrees to take the first presidency, afterwards this function will continue to be taken and performed by the next country following alphabetical order.

The Health Network discussed the possibility that the future Health Network meetings could also be used for policy discussions on a specific health system topic at which policy- and decision-makers, such as deputy ministers, would be invited.

The Health Network felt that the impetus created by the Second Health Ministers' Forum should not be lost and that ways should be found for health ministers from the countries of south-eastern Europe to meet more regularly, possibly informally, and that the coordinated views of the countries of south-eastern Europe should be heard in international forums.

The regional project managers were invited to discuss the ideas presented at the Second Health Ministers' Forum with their country managers, for possible implementation. In particular, the possibilities and need to link more closely the communicable diseases project with the current initiative in the region, launched by the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity of Greece in cooperation with the European Commission within the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECF) on avian influenza were mentioned. The National Health Coordinator of Greece will explore the possible mechanisms for such close cooperation to avoid any duplication of activities and to make best use of the available resources.

The Health Network expressed its appreciation and thanks for the considerable work the WHO Regional Office for Europe (Maria Haralanova and her team) and the host country (Snezana Cicevalieva and her team) have put into preparing this very successful Second Health Ministers' Forum and Athanassios Constantopoulos for his work and devotion to the Health Network.

## **Annex 1a**

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