

Statement of the
International Pharmaceutical Students' Federation (IPSF)
and
International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA)

70th Session of WHO Europe Regional Committee

Agenda Item 3

“The state of health in the WHO European Region, including lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic”

Honourable Chair,

Distinguished Delegates,

We are speaking today on behalf of the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) and the International Pharmaceutical Students' Federation (IPSF) which jointly represent the voice of over 1.5 million medical and pharmaceutical students in over 134 countries worldwide.

IFMSA and IPSF have joined efforts this year to discuss how interprofessional-care, empowered by interprofessional education and collaboration, is a vital step to ensure sustained development of the health workforce in the European region, to increase preparedness for challenges posed to health systems. Our joined forces worked on developing a Call for Action on Interprofessional Collaboration and Education focused on building a sustainable health workforce, that has been endorsed by several healthcare student organisations, showcasing the importance of interprofessional collaboration.

For the youth and future healthcare professionals, the COVID-19 pandemic can indeed be considered as the most significant public health crises we have faced during our lifetime. We recognise and value the leadership and roles of WHO in orienting and following up with country-specific and regional plans to control the pandemic by preventing both morbidity and mortality. The collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been inspirational resulting in reforms to health systems and health policies in Europe and worldwide.

Nonetheless, it is clear the substantial impact the pandemic had on the education of healthcare students across Europe. IFMSA and IPSF are highly concerned that the lack of interaction with peers leads to less stimulation as it is proven that an important portion of the learning process involves students learning from interacting and collaborating with each other. Pandemics require a prepared workforce and therefore, it is our joint responsibility to ensure that medical and pharmacy education continues to provide the necessary tools to our students to fully integrate the workforce. Only well-trained health care students will be well-prepared and resilient health care professionals in the future, empowered to build a healthier, safer and more prosperous European Region.

We call on the WHO and the Member States to guarantee that sufficient efforts are made to ensure the continuation of high-quality health care students education and avoid medium or long-term consequences of the pandemic on the development of the health workforce in the European region.

These circumstances, however special, are only part of many challenges health systems are facing in the European region. With all the threats that our health systems face, only through a resilient health workforce policy and planning, a strong leadership in health and a multidisciplinary approach can we tend these common challenges, guaranteeing the efficiency, sustainability and best possible health outcomes of our healthcare.

Healthcare has become increasingly dependent on the competencies of more than one profession, which is especially important when responding to health emergencies, requiring multi-professional teams of healthcare providers. Therefore, we call for the implementation of strong interprofessional education into educational curricula which prepares the future of our workforce to work in multidisciplinary settings.

Thank you.