

**Press release
7 September 2012**

53 countries to set new European health roadmap for 2020 and beyond

Copenhagen and St Julian's – Health ministers and senior officials from the 53 countries in the WHO European Region are gathering in Malta next week to vote on an ambitious long-term WHO European policy for health and well-being, Health 2020.

Health 2020, the new European policy framework, aims to maximize opportunities for promoting population health and reducing health inequities. It recommends that European countries address population health through whole-of- society and whole-of-government approaches. Health 2020 emphasizes the need to improve overall governance for health through a clear focus on the social determinants of health.

“The Health 2020 policy is an innovative roadmap. It sets out our new vision and forms the basis of the strategic health priorities for our Region in the years ahead,” said Ms Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe. “Health 2020 provides a unique Region-wide platform for sharing expertise and experience, so that, at a time of economic downturn, we leverage our individual strengths and multiply our health gains.”

Life expectancy has continuously increased in the Region: five years were gained over the last two decades and this trend is likely to continue. Inequities in health have also increasing over this period, however, and they are now a key concern for European health policy-makers. The aim of the new European health policy is to turn the tide by addressing all the key factors simultaneously, including lifestyles, universal access to health care of appropriate quality and the root causes of ill health, the social determinants.

The policy is part of the agenda of the annual meeting of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe, hosted by Malta and taking place on 10–13 September. Mr Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister of Malta, is expected to address the Regional Committee. Other high-profile participants include Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Mary of Denmark, Patron of the WHO Regional Office for Europe; Dr Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General; Mr John Dalli, European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy; Mr Yves Leterme, Deputy Secretary-General of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); Mr Joseph R. Cassar, Minister for Health, the Elderly and Community Care of Malta, and a large number of ministers and other high-level representatives from across the Region.

Health 2020 was developed in wide consultation with technical experts, Member States, civil-society and partner organizations, and the general public. In addition, the new framework policy was informed by several concurrent studies, including a European review of the social determinants of health and the health divide, led by Sir Michael Marmot, of University College London, United Kingdom; a study on governance for health in the 21st century, led by Professor Ilona Kickbusch, of the Graduate Institute of International and Development

Studies, Geneva, Switzerland and an OECD-led study on the economic case for public health action. The findings of these studies will be presented to the Regional Committee.

Health 2020 is built around four priorities:

- investing in health through taking a life-course approach and empowering people;
- tackling the Region's major health challenges: noncommunicable and communicable diseases;
- strengthening people-centred health systems, public health capacities and emergency preparedness, surveillance and response; and
- creating resilient communities and supportive environments.

Other items on the Regional Committee's agenda

In addition to Health 2020, the Regional Committee is set to consider:

- the new **European Action Plan for Strengthening Public Health Capacities and Services**, which is part of the Health 2020 process;
- the new **strategy and action plan on healthy ageing in Europe, 2012–2020**, aiming to promote healthy behaviour and ensure age-friendly environments for all populations and age groups, and is the Regional Office's first ever strategic document on this important topic;
- the Regional Office's new **strategy on relations with countries** and **policy on its geographically dispersed offices**, designed to improve WHO's collaboration with Member States; and
- **WHO reform** for a healthy future, including discussion by Member States' representatives of the WHO programme budget and how it can be adjusted to the requirements for the Organization's reform.

Note to editors

Webcast

The meeting in Malta will be recorded and webcast. The Regional Office web site offers much more information on the Regional Committee meeting – such as the agenda, working documents and more information for journalists, including the press programme.

For more information, contact:

Ina Parvanova

Regional Communications Adviser

WHO Regional Office for Europe

Tel.: +45 39 17 12 31, +45 21 19 43 74 (mobile)

E-mail: tpr@euro.who.int

Web site: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-publish/information-for-the-media>