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Health Ministers Adopt European Policy for Health and Well-Being



The WHO European Region has adopted a sustainable policy to protect and promote the health of its 900 million citizens, particularly the most vulnerable. The comprehensive new policy, called Health 2020, was endorsed by the WHO Regional Committee for Europe, WHO's governing body for the Region, during its recent meeting in Malta.

“There is a lot of action in different countries, by governments, donors, the private sector, nongovernmental organisations and other groups,” said Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe, “but we need these different players to pool their knowledge and work together. That is the only way we are going to reduce death and suffering. A European policy could be the beginning of a new united fight to save not just the lives of the citizens of today’s Europe, but also those of generations to come.”

The policy targets the main health challenges in the 53 countries in the Region, such as increasing health inequities within and between countries, shrinking public service expenditures due to the financial crisis, and a growing burden of ill health from noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), including obesity, cancer and heart disease. Its implementation will help mobilise decision-makers everywhere, within and beyond the boundaries of the health sector.

“So many factors affect health, and health has an impact on so many areas of our lives that progress on public health can only come from whole-of-society and whole-of-government efforts,” said Ms Jakab. “That is why there is a role for everyone to play in implementing Health 2020, from prime ministers, to civil society, to citizens.”

Health decision-makers and experts representing 30 countries expressed their support for the new pan-European policy, as it will help to put new measures in place and reinforce those that already exist to deal with these challenges. The WHO Regional Committee for Europe adopted the European policy Health 2020 on the third day of its sixty-second annual session.

The WHO/Europe web site offers further information on Health 2020 and the Regional Committee session.

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