

## WHO Europe's Draft Programme of Work, 2020–2025

Response of the European Cancer Organisation, July 2020

### Q1) Have any important policy avenues or opportunities been missed for moving forward with these priorities? Is the balance correct?

The European Cancer Organisation identifies an important role for WHO Europe in assisting and encouragement countries of the WHO Europe to achieve global goals of the World Health Organisation. In the years covered by the Draft Programme of Work, this would include, but is not limited to, making firm progress towards the attainment of the WHO Cervical Cancer Elimination Strategy. For this reason, we were surprised not to find more high profile mention and reference towards this uniting and attainable goal. Significant supporting roles could be played by WHO Europe in respect to such matters as advice, guidance, best practice sharing and monitoring of member country progress towards the elimination goal.

In a related fashion, we found the Programme of Work light in reference and mention to issues of disease screening. There is an established body of work by WHO Europe in this area that might be helpfully built upon in the period 2020-25, including assisting countries in keeping pace with latest research, evidence and practice as screening strategies evolve based on growing experience and latest technologies.

Respecting its role across all therapeutic areas, and the nature of its mandate and strategic goals, other over-arching items where WHO Europe could helpfully support health systems, include guiding member countries on such matters as:

- combatting the negative impact of fake news on public health, including in deterring vaccination;
- overcoming the challenges associated with medicines shortages and securing long term resolution of the problem;
- achieving successful disease prevention strategies and effective early detection strategies (e.g. in respect of tobacco control, alcohol misuse, physical activity, diet, sunbed use, screening programmes etc)
- preparing health systems to best utilise and prepare for opportunities provided by the fourth industrial revolution, including artificial intelligence, and big data;
- understanding opportunities to achieve greater efficiencies in healthcare provision; and,
- making all of Europe a dynamic environment for excellent health research.

Stakeholder organisations, such as the European Cancer Organisation and its members and Patient Advisory Committee, should be considered as potential expert resources to assist WHO Europe in exploring these topics and achieving productive advice and tools for health systems. We therefore refer the authors of the Draft Programme of Work to the directory of our membership, Patient Advisory Committee, and the 9 established networks of those members working on focused topics that all have connection to work planned by WHO Europe over the 2020-25 period.

<https://www.europecancer.org/members>

<https://www.europecancer.org/resource/governance#committees>

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<https://www.europecancer.org/topic-networks>

We trust there will be opportunities for strong engagement and input to from the above organisations and networks through the duration of the WHO Europe 2020-25 work programme.

### **Q2) Are these three tracks realistic and sufficient to make a substantial difference?**

Yes, the 3 tracks proposed may be considered realistic and sufficient in respect of existing WHO Europe resource and mandate. However, “eliminating preventable disease” could be a very powerful 4<sup>th</sup> track, not least in the wake of COVID-19 and the fresh attention given to the power and need of strong vaccination strategies. Such a track could also reinforce the WHO Europe’s role in disease prevention more generally.

In addition to this, a critical piece in supporting the success of the Programme of Work 2020-25 is the communication components of WHO Europe activity. The WHO Europe often produces reports, guidance, recommendations and other tools of high quality and recognised value. However, for their impact to be truly achieved it is vital that they gain awareness and use with the right audiences. In the fast evolving communication landscape in which we all operate there is a need for continual attention to how WHO Europe’s work can be better communicated and core output of the organisation continually connect to the persons on the ground who can best make use of them.

To that extent, the European Cancer Organisation emphasises the essential role that non governmental organisations with pan-national reach can provide to support WHO Europe in this respect. We therefore urge strong attention to building and harnessing the relationships WHO Europe currently holds with Non State Actor organisations. Best practices from organisations such as the European Medicines Agency (e.g. its Healthcare Professionals’ Working Party and Patients’ and Consumers’ Working Party) should be learnt from and requisite resource provided to stakeholder relations and engagement.

The success of the three tracks of the Draft Programme of Work also needs to be supported by a clear sense of mission, goals and objectives, that are publicly available and monitored on. A clear example in this case, would be the achievement of the WHO Cervical Cancer Elimination Strategy within the European area, including monitoring of achievement of that Strategy’s sub-goals on vaccination, screening and treatment. Such an approach could also be replicated in other areas relating to Universal Health Coverage, and ensuring healthy lives and well-being. Reporting publicly on progress towards such goals would serve to increase the accountability of WHO Europe, and help to effectively target effort and galvanise stakeholders towards areas of highlighted need.

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**Q3) How can Member States and other partners (including you/your organization) contribute to making the Regional Office collaborate more effectively and efficiently? How can they help mobilize the human and other resources needed to achieve the goals of the EPW?**

Lockdown measures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic have served to demonstrate how effectively individuals and associations can meet, work together and collaborate productively using entirely virtual means. The timing of the WHO Europe Draft Programme of Work 2020-25 should therefore take full advantage of this 'new normal' by reviewing all past ways of working with stakeholder organisations to identify if new virtual tools could make the processes more open, more efficient and more effective. Regular virtual update and exchange meetings with stakeholders should be a core feature of the new Programme of Work, including reporting on delivery of goals (see answer to question 2), and ongoing opportunities for input to projects and other outputs of WHO Europe.

**Q4) Other remarks**