



#Youth4Health

Tirana 2022 Health and Well-being Forum for Youth

25-27 October 2022, Tirana, Albania

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Scope and purpose

Background

Today the world has the largest generation of young people in history.¹ In the WHO European Region, 35.7% of the population is under 30 years of age.² Young people are diverse, representing different backgrounds, concerns, expectations and needs.

Young people have been particularly affected during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially those already in vulnerable situations, due to their stage of life and the disruption to social, educational, emotional, economic, employment and individual freedoms associated with this time.³ They have experienced negative impacts on their physical and mental health and have been impacted on by post COVID-19 conditions such as long COVID. Additionally, COVID-19 vaccine uptake among young people remains relatively low in low, lower-middle and upper-middle income countries.

It is today's young people who will face the long-term economic and social consequences of the pandemic. Therefore, it is crucial that they are listened to and included in efforts to protect communities.

They have already shown great resilience, resourcefulness and the ability to drive change: all over the world there have been great examples of youth-led responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and other threats. As the leaders of tomorrow, young people should have equal opportunities to actively participate and lead in the recovery efforts from the pandemic, in preparing for future pandemics and crises and in building a sustainable future for all.

As a special initiative of the WHO Regional Director for Europe, the WHO Regional Office for Europe is actively working to increase meaningful engagement with young people in the Region to embed their voices and perspectives in all areas of work that

¹ Youth. In: Sustainable Development Goals [website]. New York: United Nations; 2022 (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/youth/>, accessed 1 September 2022).

² Calculated using data from <https://population.un.org/wpp/>.

³ Youth and COVID-19: Response, recovery and resilience. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; 2020 (<https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/youth-and-covid-19-response-recovery-and-resilience-c40e61c6/>, accessed 1 September 2022).

support the implementation of the European Programme of Work, 2020–2025,⁴ and to ensure that no one is left behind.

The first milestone of the youth initiative was achieved in September 2021, when the Regional Office hosted its first Young People and Young Professionals Forum (YPYP Forum), a pre-event of the 71st session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe. The YPYP Forum welcomed young people virtually from across the Region to offer their perspectives on how the Regional Office can be more receptive and responsive to the views and needs of young people and to better engage them in WHO's work. A key output of the YPYP Forum was the creation of the Roadmap for Engagement with Younger People in the WHO European Region,⁵ which includes recommended actions to increase engagement between the Regional Office, its Member States and young people.

In the Region there have been efforts to step up engagement with young people. In 2021 the European Union (EU) announced that 2022 is the European Year of Youth, which aims to highlight the importance of European young people and to build a better, greener, more inclusive and digital future for them.⁶ Additionally, Tirana, Albania was awarded by the EU's European Youth Forum the European Youth Capital 2022.⁷ Albania is committed to addressing the health and well-being of young people, including by increasing engagement with them and providing them with opportunities to organize and connect.

Given the momentum of engagement with young people that has been built within Albania and the Region, an international youth forum provides the opportunity to create a space for young people from throughout the Region to gather, share and network and to empower young leaders to support improved health and well-being and sustainable development for all.

Purpose

The purpose of the Tirana 2022 Health and Well-being Forum for Youth is to bring together young people, as well as public health experts and other partners from across the WHO European Region to network and engage in dialogue on the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and to discuss other current health and well-being issues that impact on, and are important to, young people.

A range of health and well-being topics will be included in the Forum, including in areas of COVID-19 impacts and preparing for the next emergency; COVID-19 and vaccination fake news, misinformation and risk communication; mental health; sexual and reproductive health and rights; digital health; disability; climate change and health; inclusive approaches to health care; and noncommunicable disease risk factors. Additionally, it will be the first opportunity where the Regional Office will engage with young people on exploring standards for youth participation and engagement in the Region.

⁴ European Programme of Work 2020-2025: united action for better health in Europe. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2021 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/339209>, accessed 1 September 2022).

⁵ Roadmap for engagement with younger people in the WHO European Region. Lisbon: European Medical Student's Association; 2021 (<https://emsa-europe.eu/roadmap-for-engagement-with-younger-people-in-the-who-european-region/>, accessed 1 September 2022).

⁶ European Year of Youth 2022. Brussels: European Commission; 2022 (https://europa.eu/youth/year-of-youth_en, accessed 1 September 2022).

⁷ Tirana European Youth Capital 2022: what will this bring?. Tirana: Visit-Tirana.com; 2022 (http://www.visit-tirana.com/news/view/341/Tirana_European_Youth_Capital_2022-_what_will_this_bring, accessed 1 September 2022).

Objectives

The Forum objectives are to:

- provide an interactive, fun and engaging medium for young people to network, lead and discuss key health and well-being issues, and share their experiences of life and their hopes and concerns for the future;
- mobilize commitment to youth engagement at regional, national and subnational levels;
- bring attention to youth health and well-being issues in the Region, including on the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- agree on the design of the WHO Regional Office for Europe's youth engagement going forward, laying the foundation for its youth network #Youth4Health.

Outcomes

1. Capture and document the best practice examples, including of policies, programmes and other actions related to Forum topics
2. Provide advice, feedback and input, on behalf of young people in the Region, into the development of strategies and projects presented at the Forum
3. Commence the engagement process required to develop standards for participation and engagement in the Region
4. Develop an outcome statement, capturing the voices of young people on the Forum topics.

Format

The Forum will be in-person and will take place over 3 days, 25– 27 October 2022. There will be a mix of plenary, panel and interactive sessions and events throughout the 3 days. Plenary and panel sessions and a press conference will be livestreamed.

Language

The official working language of the Forum will be in English, with simultaneous interpretation into and from Albanian and Russian. All Forum documents will be translated into Albanian and Russian.

Number of participants

Approximately 300 participants, including both national and international representatives, will be invited to attend the event in-person.

Participants

The Forum will be attended by: youth representatives from international and national youth organizations; youth representatives from health and well-being organizations and professional groups; national (Albanian) medical, nursing and health professional students; international health and well-being experts and advisers, including from the WHO Regional Office for Europe; selected government ministers and mayors from throughout the WHO European Region who have best practices to share or represent Member States where young people under 30 make up more than 40% of the overall population; and United Nations agencies and development partners, including the United Nations Youth Envoy and the media.

Youth participant age range and other criteria

There is no universally agreed international definition of the age range covering youth or young people. The National Youth Law in Albania, approved in 2019, considers a "young person" as an individual, female or male, who is between the age of 15 and 29 years⁸. There was agreement from all Forum organizing parties that young people aged 16–29 years of age be invited to the Forum.

The youth representatives invited to attend the forum must live, study or work in one of the 53 Member States in the WHO European Region.

Organizers and funding

The Forum will be organized by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (Ministry of Health and Social Policies), Albania, the Office of the Minister of State for Youth and Children, Albania, the Municipality of Tirana, the WHO Regional Office for Europe and the WHO Country Office Albania.

The United Nations Population Fund will be co-chairing sessions with the WHO Regional Office for Europe on topics of disability, sexual and reproductive health and rights and inclusive approaches to health care.

The Forum will be cosponsored by the Ministry of Health and Social Policies, the Municipality of Tirana and the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

⁸ The National Youth Law in Albania. Tirana: Government of Albania; 2019 (<https://www.parlament.al/Files/ProjektLigje/20191107152923ligj%20nr.%2075,%20dt.%204.11.2019.pdf>, accessed 1 September 2022).