



**WHO Regional Committee for Europe
71st session
Virtual Consultation: primary health care
24 March 2021; 8 April 2021; 13 April 2021**

**5 March 2021
Original: English**

Scope and purpose

Virtual consultation

Realizing the potential of primary health care: lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic in the WHO European Region

Working document for submission to the WHO Regional Committee for Europe at its 71st session

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a dramatic loss of life, health and well-being across the WHO European Region. Primary health care has been, and will remain, fundamental in the response to the pandemic, mitigating these impacts and alleviating human suffering. Primary care has played a dual role during the pandemic; significantly increased responsibilities and demands on primary care have required rapid adaptation and transformation. The context of the pandemic is therefore an opportunity for learning and translating these lessons into actions for stronger primary care services that truly leave no one behind.

Against this background, primary health care will feature significantly on the agenda of 71st session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe, to be held in September 2021. The deliberations will be informed by a working document drafted by the Secretariat. The draft working document sets out a proposed way forward to realize the potential of primary health care and the implement commitments set out in the European Programme of Work, 2020–2025 – “United Action for Better Health in Europe” (EPW), using lessons learned from the pandemic. The working document positions primary care at the nexus of the three core priorities and four flagship initiatives of the EPW. It aims to provide the rationale, policy and programmatic considerations needed to strengthen primary health care in the COVID-19 recovery period, and provides the background for a resolution, which will be submitted to the Regional Committee for adoption.

Objective

The objective of the virtual consultation is to offer an opportunity for Member States to discuss and shape the proposed working document, Realizing the potential of primary health care: lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic in the WHO European Region.

Expected outcomes

- (i) The consultation will enable the Secretariat to revise the draft working document to better represent and prioritize Member States' perspectives, achievements, lessons learned and priorities, in relation to strengthening primary health care in the post-pandemic period.
- (ii) The consultation will provide greater clarity on Member State priorities for WHO's work on primary health care for 2021–2025 under the EPW.
- (iii) The consultation will provide important input into the drafting of the resolution to be presented to the Regional Committee.

Participants

Participants in the consultation will be high-level national health policy-makers with responsibility for strengthening primary health care, as nominated by their Ministry of Health. Some 20–30 Member State representatives are expected to take part in each consultation.

Consultation format

Three dates are proposed for the consultations, to provide flexibility and maximize participation. Member States can choose the date most fitting for their nominee(s).

- Option 1: 24 March 2021 9.00–11.30 CET (working language: English)
- Option 2: 8 April 2021 9.00–11.30 CET (working language: Russian)
- Option 3: 13 April 2021 9.00–11.30 CET (working language: English)

Each consultation session will last 2.5 hours, including a plenary session with the presentation of the working document and supporting evidence, followed by moderated break-out room discussions. The event outline maximizes time for Member State representatives to speak, both in plenary as well as in small groups.

Upon receipt of their nominations, participants will receive the programme, the draft working document and a Zoom link to attend the consultation.