Shifting together to well-being economies: investing in healthy, fairer, prosperous societies today

Outcome statement of the WHO European Regional High-level Forum on Health in the Well-being Economy
1–2 March 2023 Copenhagen, Denmark
1. We, the participants of the WHO Regional High-level Forum on Health in the Well-Being Economy, recognize the growing interest in well-being economies, that is, “a policy orientation and governance approach which aims to put people and their well-being at the centre of policy and decision-making”.

2. A well-being economy approach prioritizes investments in social, economic, human and planetary well-being. The approach builds on decades of thinking and action across domains, including health systems, economics, international development, environmental sustainability, health in all policies and the social determinants of health.

3. We recognize that well-being economies pursue inclusive and sustainable development, and we require population health, fairness, social justice and a healthy environment to be at their heart.

4. We recognize that well-being economies and public health have a shared commitment to enable all people, regardless of age, gender, place of origin and ethnicity, to live healthy, socially connected and prosperous lives in dignity and within planetary boundaries.

5. We reaffirm our commitment to the shared WHO European Region values of solidarity, equity, health and prosperity for all.

6. We recognize that the health sector is a beneficiary of well-being economies in terms of policies and measures that promote healthier populations. The health sector is also a driver of the well-being economy: healthier populations and health systems are already contributing and have further potential to increase social cohesion, economic development and planetary well-being.

7. This aligns with a key goal of the European Programme of Work, 2020–2025 – “United Action for Better Health in Europe” – namely, to leave no one behind – as well as wider commitments and programmes, such as:
   • the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals;
   • the European Union’s Council conclusions on the Economy of Wellbeing;
   • the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and associated 2015 Paris Agreement;
   • Regional Committee resolution EUR/RC69/RS – Accelerating progress towards healthy, prosperous lives for all, increasing equity in health and leaving no one behind in the WHO European Region;
   • recommendations of the Pan-European Commission on Health and Sustainable Development;
   • the Geneva Charter for Well-being;
   • programmes of work on inclusive and sustainable development from organizations such as the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Institute, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and the Asian Development Bank; and
   • OECD’s longstanding work on going Beyond GDP, as illustrated by the OECD Well-being Framework and the broader programme of work of the Centre on Well-being, Inclusion, Sustainability and Equal Opportunity.

8. We recognize the vital importance of four essential well-being capitals in responding to and recovering from current challenges, including the pressures on health, social protection and welfare systems; impacts of climate change; and widening social fractures. We commit to advocating for the reorientation of business priorities, public policies and investments to harness these capitals:

- **human well-being**, including mental health and healthy life expectancy
- **social well-being**, encompassing trust and cohesion
- **economic well-being**, incorporating decent work, livelihoods and social protection
- **planetary well-being**, including good air, green spaces and water quality.

9. We affirm that achieving these well-being goals can only be achieved by providing an adequately sized health workforce, avoiding excessive workload and burnout.

10. Policies and spending that improves well-being are an investment in the future and not a passive expense that needs to be cut.

11. We stress the importance of ensuring that equity and well-being are at the heart of health sector policies and operations, including by implementing:

- health system procurement and employment policies and practices to generate social and environmental benefits, including through promoting decent work as part of the health workforce;
- health care that delivers the four essential well-being capitals, for example by limiting the use of out-of-pocket payments, engaging communities that are being left behind in decision-making, and developing environmentally sustainable services;
- initiatives to boost prevention, including the focus on preventing avoidable disease, encouraging walking, cycling, green spaces, decent work and sustainable food systems;
- initiatives to deliver gender equality across the health workforce and around informal care that is provided by family and community members without professional training;
- equity of access to integrated health and social care, including in rural areas;
- cross-sectoral solutions to address population needs, such as mental health and the social and economic inclusion of young people, through working with local communities to define priorities and solutions; and
- the collection and analysis of data disaggregated by, for example, socioeconomic status, age, sex and geographical location.

12. The European Regional High-level Forum has set out the agenda for health in the well-being economy, and sustained collaboration will be required to deliver impact. This will require engagement between health, finance and economy sectors; building a common language among these sectors, for example around green and sustainable economies; and sustainable development.
13. We ask the WHO Regional Office for Europe, in consultation with Member States and in collaboration with partners, to:

- provide technical assistance that strengthens the know-how, investment cases and modelling of the return on investment in building well-being economies;
- share learning from aligned WHO initiatives on social, economic and environmental determinants of health;
- develop policy tools to guide decision-makers on investment, prioritization and progress towards well-being economies – these should help to clarify key concepts and support policy implementation and measurement of impacts;
- convene a regular forum between ministries of health, finance, labour, social affairs and economic development to assess progress, overcome barriers and set an agenda outlining how the health sector can serve as a driver and ally in the shift towards well-being economies that deliver better health for all; and
- organize multisectoral and multicountry dialogues on approaches to implement well-being economies, for example, by:
  - finding common ground between central banks, treasuries and the public health sphere; and
  - tackling the most important issues – ageing societies, young people’s mental health and inclusion, remote and marginalized areas, and resilience of health and social protection systems.

14. We call on donors to support this work by funding research, policy exchange, advocacy and transformational programmes, including around:

- innovative policies to deliver well-being
- leveraging public value from private investments
- developing the evidence around well-being economies
- engaging local communities, regions, the public and business as partners in well-being economies.

15. We urge the WHO Regional Office for Europe, in collaboration with other relevant actors, to develop a proposal with concrete actions and impact measurement to advance health and well-being in the well-being economy to be presented for consideration by Member States at the 74th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe, the governing body of the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

16. The Regional Office will engage with partners to advance the actions in this outcome statement.

The WHO European Well-being Economy Initiative is led by the WHO European Office for Investment for Health and Development of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, based in Venice, Italy.