

The WHO Regional Director's Advisory Council on Innovation for Noncommunicable Diseases Years 2021–2022 in review



The World Health Organization was established in 1948 as the specialized agency of the United Nations serving as the directing and coordinating authority for international health matters and public health. One of WHO's constitutional functions is to provide objective and reliable information and advice in the field of human health. It fulfils this responsibility in part through its publication programmes, seeking to help countries make policies that benefit public health and address their most pressing public health concerns.

The WHO Regional Office for Europe is one of six regional offices throughout the world, each with its own programme geared to the particular health problems of the countries it serves. The European Region embraces nearly 900 million people living in an area stretching from the Arctic Ocean in the north and the Mediterranean Sea in the south and from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Pacific Ocean in the east. The European programme of WHO supports all countries in the Region in developing and sustaining their own health policies, systems and programmes; preventing and overcoming threats to health; preparing for future health challenges; and advocating and implementing public health activities.

To ensure the widest possible availability of authoritative information and guidance on health matters, WHO secures broad international distribution of its publications and encourages their translation and adaptation. By helping to promote and protect health and prevent and control disease, WHO's books contribute to achieving the Organization's principal objective – the attainment by all people of the highest possible level of health.

The WHO Regional Director's Advisory Council on Innovation for Noncommunicable Diseases Years 2021–2022 in review

Abstract

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are responsible for nearly 90% of deaths and 85% of years lived with disability in the WHO European Region. To intensify efforts to tackle these diseases, the Regional Director for the WHO Regional Office for Europe established an Advisory Council on Innovation for Noncommunicable diseases (NCDAC) in December 2020. Reducing noncommunicable diseases: a signature roadmap for the WHO European Region is the outcome of a year-long reflection by the NCDAC. At the centre of the Roadmap are six signature initiatives — covering cardiovascular diseases (hypertension and salt intake), childhood obesity, digital marketing, greener and healthier cities, alcohol taxes as health taxes, and data and digital health — designed to close the gaps between knowledge and implementation and to foster innovation. These signature initiatives comprise actions to increase engagement and advocate for scaled-up policy implementation and actions to accelerate progress by innovating, advancing knowledge or developing new tools.

Keywords

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs)
WHO European Region
Policy
Public Health
Signature initiatives

© World Health Organization 2022

Some rights reserved. This work is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO licence (**CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO**; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo>). Under the terms of this licence, you may copy, redistribute and adapt the work for non-commercial purposes, provided the work is appropriately cited, as indicated below. In any use of this work, there should be no suggestion that WHO endorses any specific organization, products or services. The use of the WHO logo is not permitted. If you adapt the work, then you must license your work under the same or equivalent Creative Commons licence. If you create a translation of this work, you should add the following disclaimer along with the suggested citation: “This translation was not created by the World Health Organization (WHO). WHO is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation. The original English edition shall be the binding and authentic edition: The WHO Regional Director’s Advisory Council on Innovation for Noncommunicable Diseases. Years 2021–2022 in review”.

Any mediation relating to disputes arising under the licence shall be conducted in accordance with the mediation rules of the World Intellectual Property Organization.

Suggested citation. The WHO Regional Director’s Advisory Council on Innovation for Noncommunicable Diseases. Years 2021–2022 in review”. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2022. Licence: **CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO**.

Cataloguing-in-Publication (CIP) data. CIP data are available at <http://apps.who.int/iris>. Sales, rights and licensing. To purchase WHO publications, see <http://apps.who.int/bookorders>. To submit requests for commercial use and queries on rights and licensing, see <http://www.who.int/about/licensing>.

Third-party materials. If you wish to reuse material from this work that is attributed to a third party, such as tables, figures or images, it is your responsibility to determine whether permission is needed for that reuse and to obtain permission from the copyright holder. The risk of claims resulting from infringement of any third-party-owned component in the work rests solely with the user.

All photos: ©WHO
Design: Pellegrini

What is in this report?

Foreword by the Regional Director, WHO Regional Office for Europe	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Noncommunicable Disease Advisory Council in a nutshell	1
Timeline of key activities by NCDAC	4
Key outputs by end of 2021	5
Activities of the NCDAC from 2021 to 2022	6
1: Actions to increase engagement and advocate for scaled up policy action	6
2: Actions to accelerate progress through innovation, advancing knowledge and developing new tools	13

Foreword by the Regional Director of the WHO Regional Office for Europe

I created the Noncommunicable Diseases Advisory Council (NCDAC) in December 2020, with the aim of accelerating progress towards reducing the burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) in the WHO European Region, by fostering innovation and tackling health inequalities, and ensuring universal health coverage for all. The creation of six signature initiatives on priority topics was a first step towards this goal, ultimately leading to the development of Reducing noncommunicable diseases: a signature roadmap for the WHO European Region; a living document outlining the synergies between signature initiatives, paving the way for a healthier future.

After one year of intense work, this report is proof that commitment and dedication can overcome the challenges that we face in delivering this work that is vital to our Region. The NCDAC has made great progress towards achieving the targets set in the Roadmap agreed in November 2021. There are examples of policy dialogues and workshops for country support; of conferences on key topics such as data and digital health and publications on high-impact peer-reviewed journals. I am proud to see the impact of the NCDAC for a larger audience,

ultimately inspiring others to contribute to the reduction of the NCD burden in our Region. In the upcoming months, more initiatives are planned to be launched; an example is the Member State-led informal network of first ladies/ first gentlemen, the aim of which is to raise awareness and to advocate for policies that reduce childhood obesity.

The work of the NCDAC does not stop here. It is now the time to reflect on its accomplishments and accelerate progress towards the milestones and indicators of each signature initiative. As resources are finite, innovation should also translate into successful partnerships extending across different NCD issues that maximize our impact and open new avenues for collaboration.

Last but not least, it is important to keep the focus on the people: aiming for a WHO European Region free of NCDs, with universal access to health care and for those who need it the most. Therefore, we look forward to continuing exploring the NCDAC's potential to catalyse innovation and new partnerships, intensifying efforts to scale up action to attain SDG target 3.4 by 2030.



Hans Henri P. Kluge
Regional Director
WHO Regional Office for Europe

Acknowledgements

Implementing an ambitious initiative such as the NCDAC brings tremendous challenges, as we are driven to think outside the box and move beyond the ‘business as usual’ approach of moving WHO programmes forward. Over the last two years, signature initiative leads were truly committed to exploring how they could work alongside with councilors to explore innovative initiatives, while moving on with programmatic objectives of the areas they lead in WHO European Region amidst a global pandemic. Councilors were also key in the process, using their combined expertise and diverse backgrounds to deliver the mission of the NCDAC across multiple NCD topics. Without their ongoing dedication, it would certainly not be possible to achieve the results on this report. The WHO is extremely grateful for the time and effort put into the NCDAC by all the councilors and the WHO teams over the past two years and hope the dedication and the will to continue will flourish further in the coming years.



Noncommunicable Disease Advisory Council in a nutshell

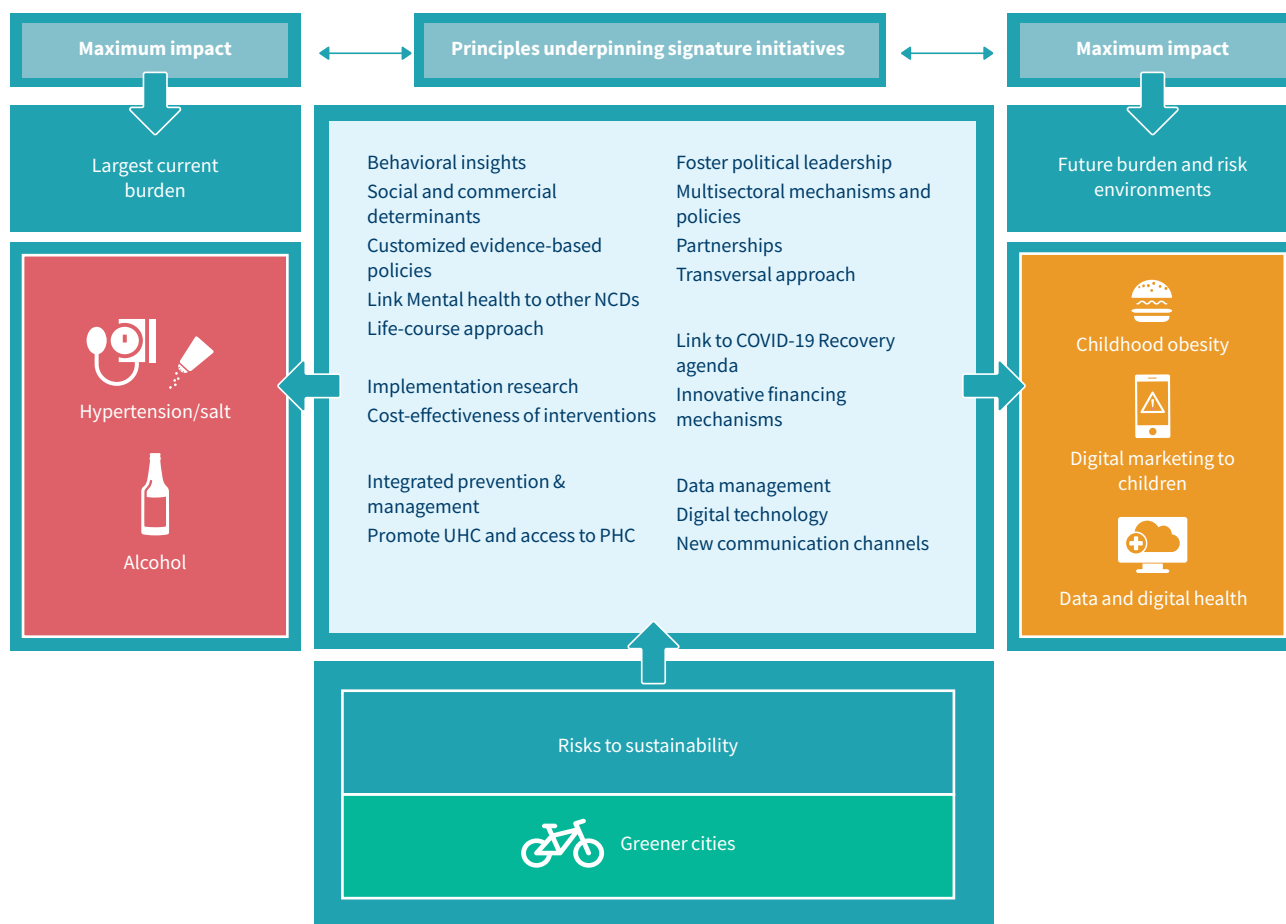
Across Europe, noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) account for 90% of all deaths. Cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes account for around 80% of deaths from NCDs. Many are preventable through a combination of multisectoral low-cost interventions focused on modification of risk factors, early detection and treatment. In 2013, Member States ratified the WHO Global Action Plan (GAP) on NCDs, committing to implementing a set of policy options including nine voluntary global targets to be achieved by 2025 with the aim of reducing premature mortality from cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory diseases by 25%.

The Regional Director for the WHO Regional Office for Europe established the Noncommunicable Disease Advisory Council (NCDAC) in December 2020 with an aim of accelerating the progress on the prevention and control of NCDs and to deliver the NCD GAP targets. The work of the NCDAC complements the pan-European cancer movement United Action Against Cancer and together with the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control to guide cost-effective solutions are central to achieving the WHO's European Programme of Work 2020–2025.

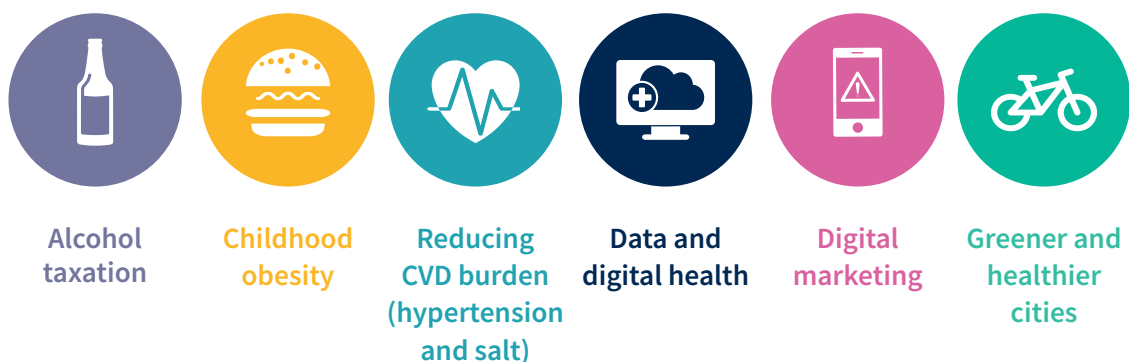
The NCDAC consists of high-level policy makers and leaders, renowned academics, clinical experts and representatives of special interest groups. It provides advice for shaping and implementing innovative approaches to recommend specific avenues aimed at strengthening collaboration and as an accelerator of policy engagement, mobilization of support and advocacy.

Through a series of multiple discussions, the NCDAC identified a sub-group of issues with the strongest evidence for action and the maximum potential for impact out of which six signature initiatives (SI) were launched. Each initiative is led by member of WHO staff supported by a working group of NCDAC councilors to develop novel and innovative approaches to accelerate progress and inspire action through fostering partnerships and mobilizing society.

Fig. 1. Key focus areas and core principles underpinning signature initiatives



The focus areas highlighted in the red, orange and green boxes have been developed into six signature initiatives:





Childhood obesity

Ensure a healthier future for Europe's children by tackling childhood overweight and obesity

Diseases linked to overweight and obesity account for 5-7% of total health care costs in Europe. Emerging evidence suggests that the COVID 19 pandemic had shifted dietary habits and physical activity negatively. This SI comprises several actions to increase engagement on childhood obesity at different levels and proposes novel ways to bring new voices and ideas to the table and disseminate knowledge and best practices. The SI aims to halt or reverse the increase in childhood overweight and obesity in at least 15 European countries by 2025.



Alcohol taxes as health taxes

Raising the untapped potential of alcohol taxes to reduce alcohol affordability and save lives

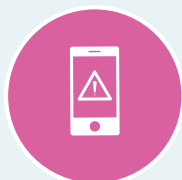
Despite the overwhelming evidence of effectiveness of alcohol pricing policies, they are the least implemented intervention in the WHO European Region. Alcohol control measures play a key role in efforts to achieve the global goal of the relative reduction of premature mortality by 25% from NCDs by 2025. This SI focuses on optimizing alcohol pricing policies and leveraging the untapped potential of alcohol taxes as health taxes through offering tailored support to member states in developing, tailoring, implementing and monitoring alcohol taxes, along with taxes on tobacco and sugar-sweetened beverages. The SI aims to develop a WHO benchmark for a minimum tax share for alcoholic beverages, with the goal that by 2025, at least 26 Member States (50%) will have implemented alcohol taxation at a level of at least a minimal tax share of 25%.



Reducing CVD burden (hypertension and salt)

Reduce inequalities in CVD burden and high blood pressure through improving hypertension control and implementing salt reduction strategies

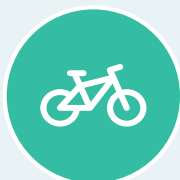
In 2019, hypertension led to 13% of disability-adjusted life-years across the WHO European Region and was the cause of 24% of all deaths from CVD. WHO-recommended cost-effective and effective interventions are not fully implemented and need to be scaled up through a health-systems strengthening approach that includes a gender perspective. This SI has a strong focus on applying good programming in innovative ways within and across countries. Deliverables include: WHO European Regional report on hypertension (prevalence, treatment, control); inter-country meetings on hypertension and salt reduction; and country demonstration projects with implementation research.



Digital marketing

Protect children and young people from exposure to unhealthy products in digital contexts

Digital marketing of unhealthy products such as foods high in saturated fat, salt, free sugars, alcohol and tobacco presents new risks to health, especially of children and young people. During the COVID-19 pandemic digital marketing of such products intensified. Many studies have shown increases in consumption of these unhealthy products when promoted online. This SI is designed to help countries develop a clear roadmap for legislation and legal frameworks for restricting digital marketing to children, with the aim of supporting seven countries to implement legislation by 2025.



Greener and healthier cities

Improving air quality and healthy mobility

550,000 deaths per year are estimated to be attributed to air pollution in the WHO European Region. Reduction of exposure to air pollution requires multisectoral actions and multilevel governance – from global to local. Supporting member states to develop conditions for safe non-motorized transport, in particular cycling and walking, delivers multiple benefits for their citizens. Through support for regional, subregional and national networks and exchange platforms, enhancing the knowledge base and developing evidence-based materials for city authorities and leadership, this SI aims for member states to have developed national cycling and policies, strategies and/or programmes by 2025.



Data and digital health

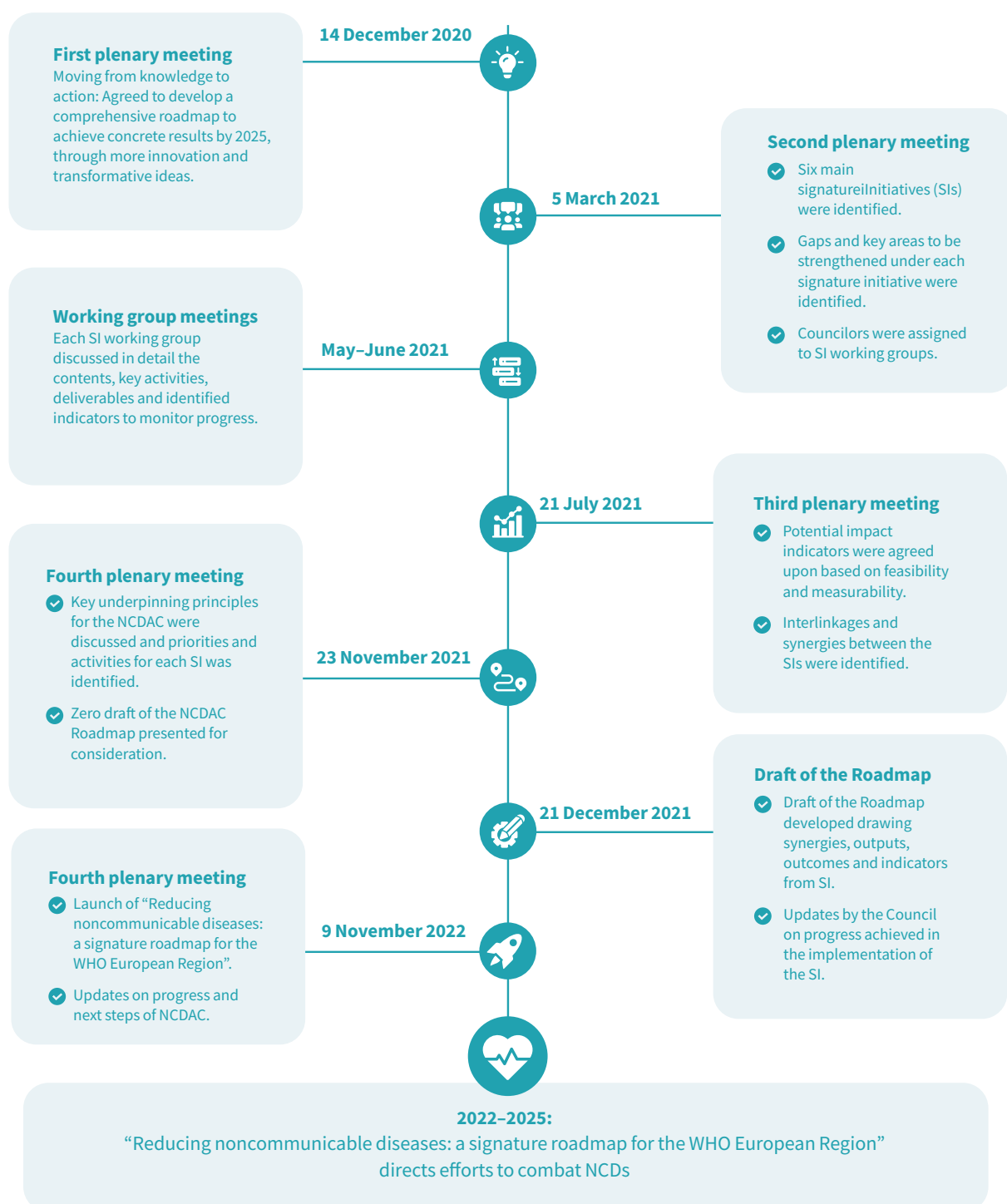
The big unlock - Harnessing the power of data and digital health in NCDs

To be able to assess and compare the success of approaches in prevention and control of NCDs across regions and countries, types of data and ways of collecting them should be harmonized, analysed and reported as standardized data as much as possible. While respecting all legal, social, human rights and ethical considerations this allows comparisons. Digital health provides a robust infrastructure that is a prerequisite to successful integrated care. This SI will start a regional conversation on these issues through an international conference on big data, artificial intelligence and digital health and will drive progress through development of demonstration projects.

There are many links and synergies between the signature initiatives with all the recommended actions converging around two levers:

- 1) Actions to increase engagement and advocate for scaled-up policy action;
- 2) Actions to accelerate progress through innovation, advancing knowledge and developing new tools.

Timeline of key activities by NCDAC



Key outputs by end of 2021

The four key outcomes and outputs set for the NCDAC were all achieved by the end of 2021.

Output			
A scientific paper on the untapped potential of alcohol excise taxes is published in a high-impact journal.	Collaboration with supranational organizations and existing networks that facilitate digital innovative is established and, where appropriate, partnerships created.	A conference on big data, artificial intelligence and digital health for NCDs has been organized to define a hierarchy of targets and identify implementation processes.	A network of First Ladies/ gentlemen is initiated.
Description			
<p>A modelling study on alcohol excise taxes was published in the Lancet Regional Health Europe-giving open access to the full article. The results are being used by the NCDAC to advocate to member states at capacity building workshops.</p> <p>Case study 7</p>	<p>A study exploring of the digital marketing ecosystem and its impact on consuming tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy food was published. Following up on this work, the SI is currently analysing the existing regulations to propose a model law to regulate digital marketing in the WHO European Region.</p> <p>Case study 8</p>	<p>Digital4NCD Conference was held in December 2021, with a statement of commitment issued by member states recognizing digital environments as a determinant of health for the first time and supporting further collaboration to advance the knowledge of digital health and implementation of national digital health strategies. The conference took stock of the good practice examples from member states and developed “Compendium of good practices” to share the knowledge and experiences.</p> <p>Case study 6</p>	<p>The network was launched with the first summit of the network of First Ladies/ First Gentlemen planned for April 2023 in Croatia.</p> <p>Case study 1</p>
Level of achievement			
✓ Fully achieved	✓ Fully achieved	✓ Fully achieved	✓ Fully achieved

Activities of the NCDAC from 2021 to 2022

In the following section a few selected case studies explore in detail how the NCDAC engaged and advocated for scaled up policy implementation and how these actions accelerated the progress through innovation, advancing knowledge and developing new tools.

1. Actions to increase engagement and advocate for scaled up policy action



Case study 1

Utilizing the lobbying power of the NCDAC councillors to establish a high-level forum to share policy and technical experience and knowledge by the SI Childhood obesity

The NCDAC initiated an informal network of First ladies/Gentlemen to utilize their advocacy power to promote public health policies to prevent and tackle childhood overweight and obesity to governments and non-governmental organizations. The first summit of the network is scheduled to be held in April 2023, in Croatia, and will be chaired by the First Lady of Croatia, Dr. Sanja Musić Milanovic. This summit was announced at the parallel session on “Tackling childhood overweight and obesity in the WHO European Region” at the 72nd WHO Europe Regional Committee by the First Lady of Croatia at the presence of the European Region Member States to gain a high visibility.

Photo 1: First lady of Croatia, raising visibility to the First summit of the network of first ladies/first gentlemen at the 72nd WHO Europe Regional Committee



- ✓ In the lead up to establishing this network, these high-level influencers were utilized at several events to engage the policy makers in member states, for example: a video statement by the First Lady of Croatia, at the International Strategic Dialogue on Noncommunicable Diseases and Sustainable Development Goals meeting held in Ghana, in April 2022.
- ✓ Policy dialogues to fight childhood obesity in Western Balkans, May 2022 where the First Lady of North Macedonia launched the event. Representatives from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro participated to this event.



Case study 1 contd

Photo 2: Elizabeta Gjorgjevska, the First Lady of North Macedonia, Bekim Sali, the Minister of Health, Kremlin Wickramasinghe (SI lead) and participants at the policy dialogue





Case study 2

Engaging and utilizing the networks of the NCDAC councillors to gain visibility and political commitment for utilizing the untapped potential of alcohol taxes as health taxes

The NCDAC initiative on alcohol taxes as health taxes was launched with a high visibility hybrid event in Vilnius, Lithuania in February 2022, in coordination with the WHO-backed research project on the impact of alcohol control policies on morbidity and mortality in the Baltic states, which is funded by the US National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. All three Ministers of Health in the Baltic States participated in the launch, along with representatives of the European Commission, the OECD, further representatives of Ministries of Finance and Ministries of Health as well as researchers from the Baltic States, Poland, Germany and Members of the SI working group on alcohol tax. One of the main goals of the SI is to develop guidance for the introduction of a minimum tax share for alcohol prices (that is, the proportion of tax in final consumer prices of alcoholic beverage) to influence affordability and thus motivate behaviour change in the consumer.

Photo 3: Prof. Jürgen Rehm, Prof. Aurelijus Veryga, Prof. Franco Sassi (NCDAC councillors), Michele Cecchini (OECD), Arūnas Dulkys (Minister of Health, Lithuania), Tanel Kiik (Minister of Health, Estonia), Daniels Pavļuts (Minister of Health, Latvia), Hans Kluge (Regional Director, WHO Regional Office for Europe), Carina Ferreira Borges, (SI lead)





Case study 2 contd

Photo 4: social media engagement to disseminate the message to the community



Maria Neufeld
@NeufeldM

Dr Aurelijus Veryga, Member of Parliament of Lithuania and Member of @WHO_Europe NCD Council at the launch of #alcohol signature initiative: "The only way to deal with alcohol industry is having the arguments and the data"

🇱🇹 data shows: alcohol tax saves lives AND money



WHO/Europe
@WHO_Europe

📢 "Taxes on alcoholic beverages can save hundreds of thousands of lives."

Commenting on a new Signature Initiative from the #NCD advisory council, @hans_kluge explains that increased #taxes on #alcohol are an effective health measure.

Find out more 🖱️ bit.ly/35hqXKT





Case study 3

Forging a united action through engaging with different stakeholders to reduce the CVD burden

The NCDAC working group on reducing the CVD burden had conducted presentations at multiple events to effectively engage with a wider stakeholder group involved in CVD management, including:

- ✓ A presentation at the annual congress of the European Association of Preventive Cardiology (EAPC) in April 2022, highlighting the importance of 'Policy-making and advocacy for lifelong cardiovascular prevention'.
- ✓ A presentation was given at the Annual Workshop of the European Heart Network held in Madrid, in May 2022. This network meeting was attended by delegates from over 15 countries committed to preventing cardiovascular disease in Europe.'
- ✓ To promote population level salt reduction policies, the SI is actively involved in the European Salt Action Network (ESAN), established by the WHO to provide a platform to exchange good practices, share knowledge and exchange progress and processes of salt reduction strategies in member states. A presentation was given at the 14th virtual meeting of the ESAN on 29 September 2022, which was attended by delegates from over 15 countries.



©WHO



Case study 4

Conducting policy dialogue and capacity building activities for subregions and Member States to accelerate implementation of Best Buy policies

The SI on Alcohol tax has continuously engaged NCDAC councillors in disseminating the untapped potential of taxes through capacity building workshops held in various Member States. These workshops brought together international expertise together with national stakeholders from key government entities including the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance and the State tax departments, key scientific institutes.

The following are some of the examples:

Capacity building workshop on health taxes in Kyrgyzstan, May 2022



Photo 5: Maria Neufeld (SI lead), Prof. Jürgen Rehm (NCDAC councillor)

Photo 6: Participants from the workshop representing Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Commerce and State Tax Service, Health Insurance Fund and other representatives from academia and civil society





Case study 4 contd

Workshop session on health taxes, Belgium, October 2022

Photo 7: Prof. Aurelijus Veryga presenting how to navigate the industry influence in Belgium, October 2022. Presentations were also made by Prof. Franco Sassi and Prof. Jürgen Rehm on health taxes



The SI on tackling childhood overweight and obesity conducted policy dialogues in the Western Balkans and Central Asia in May and June 2022 respectively. A training of trainers course in hybrid format on childhood obesity management for health workers was conducted in parallel to these policy dialogue events.

The report of the Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative (COSI) data of 2017/2018 in Kyrgyzstan¹ was launched at the policy dialogue for Central Asia countries held in Kyrgyzstan which had the participation of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. This report was cited by Central Asian newswires, further disseminating WHO's messages.

Photo 8: participants at the policy dialogue held in Kyrgyzstan representing Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan



1. Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative (COSI): Kyrgyzstan. Fourth round data collection (2017/2018). Copenhagen: WHO Regional office for Europe; 2022 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/356346>, accessed 4 November 2022).

2. Actions to accelerate progress through innovation, advancing knowledge and developing new tools



Case study 5

Shaping the future architecture of the policies to support greener and healthier cities at regional, national and subnational level

The WHO European Centre on Environmental and Health (ECEH), produced the WHO Global Air Quality Guidelines (AQG) for particulate matter (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀), ozone, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and carbon monoxide, as an evidence-informed tool for member states to develop air quality management. This provides quantitative health based AQG values, interim targets to guide reduction efforts towards the recommended AQG values, and qualitative statements on good practices for certain types of particulate matter. AQG is the basis of the ongoing revision of ambient air quality legislation in the European Union. At the national level, policy dialogues based on these recommendations were conducted in early 2022 in Bulgaria and Poland.





Case study 5 contd

The publication *Walking and Cycling: Latest evidence to support policy-making and practice*², was published in close collaboration with the physical activity team of the WHO Europe for NCDs. This provides a comprehensive case for why and how to promote walking and cycling, based on the latest evidence from scientific research and planning practice.

To further advocate for cycling and walking policies, the WHO ECEH developed a user friendly, web based HEAT tool³ to estimate the health and economic impact on premature mortality reduction by increased walking and cycling. This also considers changes to physical activity levels, exposure to air pollution, risk of road traffic accidents and carbon emissions.

This latest evidence and tools to support policy making were discussed at a virtual event on “Walking and cycling for green, healthy and sustainable mobility” organized for the World Bicycle Day on 3 June 2022, by the WHO ECEH office, which was attended by nearly 200 participants.



2. *Walking and cycling: latest evidence to support policy-making and practice*. WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2022 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/354589>, accessed 4 November 2022).
3. Kahlmeier, Sonja, Götschi, Thomas, Cavill, Nick, Castro Fernandez, Alberto, Brand, Christian. et al.. *Health economic assessment tool (HEAT) for walking and for cycling: methods and user guide on physical activity, air pollution, injuries and carbon impact assessments*. Regional Office for Europe; 2017 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/344136>, accessed 4 November 2022).



Case study 6

Accelerating the progress in using innovative digital health solutions to tackle challenges in NCDs through the Digital4NCD conference and policy tools such as the NCD dashboard

The Digital4NCD conference held in 14–15 December 2021, in Moscow, the Russian Federation, was organized with the aim of taking stock of the good practices and innovations of member states in digital health solutions to prevent, control and surveillance of NCDs, gaining commitment of Member States explore more innovative practices to advance health through digital health solutions and to make digital environments healthier and safer for all⁴.

Contributions at the conference were made by the NCDAC councillors, high level stakeholders such as Ministers of Health from the Belarus, Montenegro, the Russian Federation, Deputy Minister of Health, Turkey, Secretary of State of Health Serbia, Vice Minister of Health, Kazakhstan and key researchers, innovators from WHO collaborating centres, universities and other institutes and representatives from high impact journals, among many others.

Photo 9: Digital4NCD conference in hybrid format. Pictured is NCDAC councillor Dr. Iveta Nagyova delivering a talk.



4. The full recording of the two-day conference is available through <http://ncd.digital/>.



Case study 6 contd

The Member States issued a conference statement committing to advance digital solutions to tackle NCDs and this statement marks the first WHO document which recognizes digital environments as a determinant of health. With this statement, the member states also committed to make the digital environments safer and healthier for all; and called for the support and guidance from WHO to advance in digital technologies through sharing best practices, developing an implementation guide highlighting practical steps to the uptake of digital solutions for NCD surveillance and facilitating projects in member states for prevention and control. As a next step, demonstration projects will be launched and implemented.

In the lead up to the conference the following initiatives were carried out:

- ✓ A compendium of Good Practice Examples from 20 WHO European Region Member States was published.⁵
- ✓ A public webinar on “Video games and non-communicable diseases” was organized by the two SI on tackling childhood overweight and obesity and data and digital health, which explored game mechanics and other activities that affect behaviour change and identified opportunities for implementing a positive change.
- ✓ A webinar on “Improving food environments: why do we need to act now?”, organized by the three SI on tackling childhood overweight and obesity, digital marketing and data and digital health, explored the digital health solutions to tackle digital marketing, mobile applications that inform the consumer of food guidelines and healthy food choices, reducing waste and of sustainable options that reduce climate change.

The WHO European Region launched a NCD data dashboard⁶, to support Member States in monitoring their progress according to the key progress indicators in the NCD Global Monitoring framework. This dashboard provides an easily accessible platform for policy makers and the public to assess the progress made in the key indicators over the previous years of each Member State and provides the ability to visualize the level of reduction of the key indicators required to achieve the agreed targets by 2025 through the extrapolated results. This dashboard increases accountability of the key stakeholders and allows the countries to assess their progress in line with other countries and the WHO European Region. The NCD dashboard is launched with the contributions from the NCDAC councillors and the SI leads.

5. WHO European conference on tackling noncommunicable diseases through digital solutions, 14–15 December 2021, Moscow. Good practice examples: European Response to Noncommunicable Diseases 4.0: 10 years following the Moscow Declaration viewed through the lens of the European Programme of Work. WHO Regional Office for Europe 2022; (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/353060>, accessed 4 November 2022).
6. Access the NCD dashboard through the weblink: <https://app.powerbi.com/>.



Case study 6 contd

Photo 10: Dr. Iveta Nagyova and Dr. Rifat Atun (NCDAC councillors), Ivo Rokovac (SI lead), Kremlin Wickramasinghe (a.i. Head of office, WHO European NCD office) and Image of the NCD dashboard



Case study 7

Development of scientific evidence and policy monitoring tools to raise the untapped potential of alcohol taxes by utilizing the expertise and guidance of NCDAC

Under the guidance of the NCDAC members, a modelling study was conducted to showcase the potential health benefits of introducing a region-wide minimum tax share for all alcoholic beverages. The results showed that if all countries of the WHO European Region were to introduce a minimum tax level of 15% on the retail price per unit of alcohol for all types of alcoholic beverages, it would save around 133,000 lives each year; more deaths could be avoided with higher taxation. The NCDAC was also directly involved in disseminating these findings alongside the high-level SI launch event in Vilnius, Lithuania.



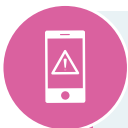
Case study 7 contd

In June 2022, the WHO European Office for NCDs launched a new technical report “No place for cheap alcohol. The potential value of minimum pricing for protecting lives”⁷, which provides a first-ever review of minimum pricing policies on alcohol at the global level and summarizes the most recent evidence as well as practical and legal implementation issues. Members of this SI were involved in reviewing the report and in its official launch, while the First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon has provided the foreword for the report. The report was picked up by several global outlets and the media helped to promote the need for better pricing and taxation policies.

The WHO Regional Office for Europe in collaboration with the Fiscal Policies for Health (TAX) Unit WHO Headquarters has initiated the first Member States survey on prices and taxes on Alcohol and Sugar Sweetened Beverage (SSB) in the European Region to expand the global WHO database on health taxes. With the help of the NCDAC councillors, the Regional Office has expanded the global survey by adding variables to meet the data demands and specificities of member states and has built an online platform to provide a user-friendly and efficient tool to collect data. The survey which is to be continued bi-annually, will allow this SI to monitor reaching the target of 50% member states implementing a minimum tax share of 25% by 2025. This survey also aims to bring together the co-partners/stakeholders of taxation policies, the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Finance, through having two focal point nominees from each country working together to provide the data. The NCDAC was involved in conducting a workshop to introduce the survey to the Member States focal points and took the opportunity to emphasize the role of data in advocating for pricing policies.



7. No place for cheap alcohol: the potential value of minimum pricing for protecting lives. WHO Regional Office for Europe 2022; <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/356597>, accessed on 4 November 2022)



Case study 8

Understanding the digital ecosystem to support development of national and international frameworks to protect children and young people from the effects digital marketing of unhealthy products

This SI explored the evolution of the digital marketing ecosystem and its impact on tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy food marketing through the publication “Understanding the digital media ecosystem”⁸ by the WHO Regional Office for Europe in June 2022. This report was reviewed by the NCDAC councillors in addition to their participation in the launch events. This report is an update to the “CLICK” framework to monitor and restrict digital marketing of unhealthy products to children and the young people that was launched in 2018 by the WHO European Office for NCDs. This new report identifies opportunities for health policy makers to implement regulatory mechanisms to protect children and young people from being exposed to unhealthy products. The report calls for a coordinated WHO voice, and a more active participation by national and European Union voices for a regulatory debate.

Based on the initial exploratory findings from this publication, a report exploring options for age verification mechanisms and guidance for member states on designing a legislative response to safeguard children from harmful impacts of food marketing will be published by the end of 2022.



8. Understanding the digital media ecosystem: how the evolution of the digital marketing ecosystem impacts tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy food marketing. WHO Regional Office for Europe 2022; (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/355277>, accessed on 4 November 2022)



Case study 8 contd

Another publication “Digital marketing of alcohol: challenges and policy options for better health in the WHO European Region” was published in December 2021, which was also reviewed by and contained contributions from, the NCDAC councillors. This explored and described the digital marketing policies currently in place in European region member states and emphasized the need for a comprehensive legislative framework to protect children and young people from the harmful effects of the digital marketing of alcohol.

Health misinformation through social media platforms and other digital venues is a growing concern, especially when marketing strategies also use false claims to make unhealthy products and lifestyles more attractive. There is much to be learnt from how social media platforms and member states handled this “infodemic” which is also applicable for regulating digital marketing. The publication “Toolkit for tackling misinformation on NCDs”¹⁰ explores in collaboration with stakeholders from governments, international organizations, traditional media and social media platforms how these organizations worked together to tackle the infodemic and how this collaborative approach can be taken forward.



9. Digital marketing of alcohol: challenges and policy options for better health in the WHO European Region. WHO Regional Office for Europe 2022; (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/350186>, accessed 4 November 2022).
10. Toolkit for tackling misinformation on noncommunicable disease: forum for tackling misinformation on health and NCDs. WHO Regional Office for Europe 2022; (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/363688>, accessed 4 November 2022).

Taken together, these case studies illustrate the progress of the NCDAC in 2021–2022, highlighting how best to tackle NCDs at the policy level. With 90% of deaths in Europe caused by NCDs, it is imperative that this work continues with a higher will and commitment.



The WHO Regional Office for Europe

The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations created in 1948 with the primary responsibility for international health matters and public health. The WHO Regional Office for Europe is one of six regional offices throughout the world, each with its own programme geared to the particular health conditions of the countries it serves.

Member states

Albania
Andorra
Armenia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Belarus
Belgium
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Croatia
Cyprus
Czechia
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Georgia
Germany

Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan
Latvia
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Monaco
Montenegro
Netherlands
North Macedonia
Norway
Poland

Portugal
Republic of Moldova
Romania
Russian Federation
San Marino
Serbia
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Tajikistan
Türkiye
Turkmenistan
Ukraine
United Kingdom
Uzbekistan

World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe

UN City, Marmorvej 51,
DK-2100, Copenhagen Ø, Denmark
Tel.: +45 4533 7000; Fax: +45 4533 7001

Email: eurocontact@who.int

Web site: www.who.int/europe