



Position Statement from the International Union for Health Promotion and Education

Meeting: 70th Session of WHO Regional Committee for Europe, 14-15 September 2020

Agenda item: The European Programme of Work (2020–2025) – “United Action for Better Health in Europe”

The International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE) strongly supports the leadership of WHO during the COVID-19 pandemic and calls for global cooperation in addressing the far-reaching impacts of the virus on our physical and mental health, and social and economic wellbeing.

This pandemic highlights the importance of strong public health systems that promote and protect the health and wellbeing of all, without discrimination based on gender, race, religion, etc. It also underscores the need for universal health coverage and strong global systems that effectively coordinate actions across sectors, ensuring a whole-of-government and whole-of-society response based on principles of equity and global solidarity.

The new European Programme of Work 2020–2025 “United action for better health” presents an opportunity for a renewed focus on integrating health promotion as an essential component of modern health systems in Europe. On behalf of our members in the European region, we strongly endorse the focus on promoting health and well-being in the new programme, alongside universal health coverage (UHC) and protecting against health emergencies.

In moving forward this programme of work, there is a need for a clear focus on transformative health promotion actions. Health promotion is an essential strategy for improving health, equity and wellbeing, and a key action underpinning the reform of health systems in Europe. The most effective and sustainable interventions for ensuring healthy lives and reducing the risks of poor mental and physical health are health promotion measures.

In view of the common challenges faced by countries in enhancing the resilience of health systems and improving health equity, there is a strong case for putting improved population health and wellbeing at the centre of the work programme and making health promotion practices and actions integral to the European Programme of Work implementation measures.

We call on the WHO Regional Office for Europe to:

- Strengthen health promotion systems in the European region in order to enhance capacity to meet the health challenges of the unfolding COVID-19 impact and its after-effects, the NCD and mental health crisis, and planetary health.
- Develop further the health promotion capacity within WHO’s own structures through appointing high-level technical staff that will provide strategic leadership for health promotion in the European region and ensure that health promotion is integrated fully and implemented across the new programme of work.

We look forward to ongoing collaboration and dialogue, and pledge our support to working with the WHO Regional Office for Europe to help enhance the further development and implementation of health promotion actions in the European region.