



Rebooting health promotion Marking 40 years of the Ottawa Charter in the WHO European Region

**Version: 1
Original: English**

**Date: 29 & 30 April 2026
Virtual**

Concept Note

Forty years ago, the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion reframed global thinking on health from a focus on treating illness to promoting overall well-being through shaping the social, economic and environmental conditions that enable people and communities to gain greater control over their health and its determinants. Since then, this vision has evolved in response to new realities while reaffirming the foundational idea that health is created where we live, work, learn and connect.

Today this approach is as critical as ever. Rising megatrends including widening inequalities, conflict, climate crisis, digital transformation, shifting demographics and the growing burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are challenging the prerequisites for health: peace, shelter, education, food, income, a stable eco-system, sustainable resources, social justice and equity. While the core principles of health promotion remain unchanged – advocating for conditions favourable to health, achieving equity, and promoting multisectoral action – the contexts and environments in which they must be applied are increasingly complex.

Social, political, economic, environmental and digital determinants of health are shaping the conditions in which people live, work and connect, and challenging effective disease prevention and the promotion of **physical and mental health and well-being**. Building and maintaining trust, addressing the social determinants of health and reducing inequalities, and empowering communities are foundational to effective and equitable responses to these challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that a health promotion approach is equally essential for communicable disease prevention and control.

Meanwhile countries are facing strained health systems, mounting costs, shrinking budgets and workforce shortages. Progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other NCD targets is faltering. Recent WHO estimates indicate that 60% of the 1.8 million annual avoidable deaths caused by NCDs in the WHO European Region could be averted with better prevention. Productivity losses from avoidable NCD deaths are approaching half a trillion euro annually.

The core intent of health promotion remains constant. What must evolve are the strategies, partnerships, policies, governance arrangements and tools through which this is realized.

To reflect on the lessons of health promotion over the past four decades and to collectively shape the path forward, the WHO Regional Office for Europe invites Member States and other stakeholders to participate in a virtual dialogue on **29-30 April 2026**. This forum will provide a space for reflection, visioning and linking the legacy of the Ottawa Charter with emerging challenges, opportunities and ways of working.

This dialogue will also contribute to the framing of a proposed WHO European Regional Strategy on tackling noncommunicable diseases and advancing health promotion and well-being 2027-2037, ensuring that it is rooted in community engagement and reflects the priorities of Member States and partners, and responds to the political, social and economic realities of today and the decade ahead.

Objectives

- **Revisit** the legacy of the Ottawa Charter and its impact on well-being in the WHO European Region and draw lessons for future action.
- **Reposition** health promotion as a strategic, equity-driven response to emerging health, social and environmental challenges, and share evidence-based practices to strengthen health promoting systems, settings and policies and inform future Regional strategies on NCDs and mental health.
- **Reinforce** partnerships and community engagement to empower people to create sustainable health-promoting environments.

Programme overview

What shapes our health? Revisiting Ottawa for a new era
29 April 2026 | 10:00–12:30 CET

Designing for health: Recommitting to health promotion
30 April 2026 | 10:00–12:30 CET

The event will include high-level panels, discussions with thought leaders and interactive breakout discussion. It is intended for policymakers, government officials at all levels, public health and health care professionals, civil society organizations, researchers, health advocates and international partners.

Registration

Participation is free, but registration is required. The event will be held in English with interpretation into Russian available. Register here: [Rebooting health promotion](#)

For questions, please contact Allison Ekberg (ekberga@who.int)