

Regional Committee for Europe

70th session

Virtual session, 14–15 September 2020

Provisional agenda item 2(b)

EUR/RC70/Inf.Doc./7

8 September 2020

200749

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

A timeline of WHO's response to COVID-19 in the WHO European Region

A living document (version 1.0 from 31 December 2019 to 30 July 2020)

The following timeline shares the story of WHO's preparedness and readiness for, and response to, coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the WHO European Region. The COVID-19 response in WHO/Europe has been built on innovation developed during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as on decades-long preparedness work that was strengthened by the legally binding [International Health Regulations \(IHR\) \(2005\)](#), reinforced with the creation of the WHO Health Emergencies Programme (WHE) in 2016, as presented in document [A69/30](#) at the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly in 2016, and the [Action Plan to Improve Public Health Preparedness and Response in the WHO European Region 2018–2023, adopted in 2018](#). In addition, various frameworks, such as the [Pandemic Influenza Preparedness \(PIP\) Framework](#), the [Better Labs for Better Health](#) initiative, and accelerated efforts in recent years to implement [IHR core capacities](#), have contributed to this foundation of [preparedness](#) on which the COVID-19 response has been built, as described below.

This document, together with input from countries' intra-action reviews (IARs) and remarks from WHO focus groups, provides the foundation for improving the response to COVID-19 in the Region. The first round of lessons learned will be presented by the WHO Regional Director for Europe in his report to the 70th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe.

This document only highlights the response operations led from the WHO Regional Office for Europe. A different tracking document will be dedicated to the support provided through WHO country and liaison offices and the teams belonging to the WHE hub-and-spoke structure in WHO/Europe priority countries and areas. Those timelines will be shared separately.

The summary below lists the key figures and timelines of the main activities that took place from 31 December 2019 to 30 July 2020 in preparing for and responding to COVID-19 in the Region. This is a living document and will be updated regularly.

Overview

On 31 December 2019, the WHO Representative Office in the People's Republic of China picked up a media statement on cases of pneumonia of unknown etiology (unknown cause) detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. The WHO Representative Office notified the IHR Regional Contact Point for the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific about the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission's statement and provided a translation of it.

Building on years of preparedness work, in particular [repurposing](#) the extensive influenza infrastructure built up over decades and further strengthened after the H1N1 influenza pandemic of 2009, European regional networks were activated to ensure the rapid detection, confirmation and description of the first cases in Europe, to understand the clinical presentation of this novel virus and its transmissibility and infection severity and to develop the optimal prevention and control strategies. This required the establishment of workstreams on surveillance and monitoring, [laboratories](#) and virology, infection prevention and control, clinical management, and country preparedness. [Readiness](#) activities also quickly became a priority for the Region, in addition to continued support to WHO country and liaison offices and to Member States and areas on matters such as essential health services delivery, communications, and protection of vulnerable populations.

The response in numbers

- Over the reporting period, WHO/Europe has held over 150 virtual capacity-building webinars in English and Russian for experts in Member States and areas on topics such as epidemiology and surveillance, laboratories, sero-epidemiology, forecasting and surge calculation, quality assurance, hospital readiness, infection prevention and control, clinical management of COVID-19 patients, risk communication and community engagement, protection of vulnerable populations, and public health measures.
- The Regional Director has made 26 [statements](#) regarding COVID-19.
- The Regional Director has [tweeted](#) 198 times regarding COVID-19.
- The Regional Office created a [COVID-19 dashboard for the Region](#) on 20 February 2020, which is updated daily, and a weekly COVID-19 regional bulletin. The dashboard has become one of the most visited pages in the history of the WHO/Europe website. It has been further developed, and by early August 2020 it had received close to 8.2 million visits. WHO/Europe and WHE have used innovative approaches to overcome the unprecedented travel restrictions and country lockdowns, such as three [virtual missions](#) (the first of their kind) and webinars, and by joining cargo and other humanitarian flights in order to be able to assess countries and areas.
- New platforms and tools (Behavioural Insight, HealthBuddy and Global Shapers) were launched to gather perceptions and behavioural insights and provide accurate and relevant information.
- WHO/Europe has conducted 116 missions to countries and areas with 21 partner deployments through the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN) and through deployment of emergency medical teams (EMTs).
- Since January, there have been over 100 [web stories](#) published and [25](#) technical guidance documents produced by WHO/Europe and shared with Member States and areas, and partners.
- US\$ 27.5 million worth of supplies have been procured for 29 countries and areas in the Region, including over 7.8 million gloves, 37.8 million masks, 5 million respirators, and over 500 000 laboratory and diagnostic supplies, including reverse transcription–polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test kits, laboratory supplies and swabs. Supply procurement is based on assessment and prioritization of the needs of Member States and areas in the context of COVID-19.

Timeline

All events listed in the timeline below are given in Central European Time unless stated otherwise. Note that the dates listed for documents are based on when they were finalized and time-stamped.

31 December 2019

The WHO Regional Office for Europe receives notice of a cluster of cases of atypical pneumonia in China.

The WHO Representative Office in the People's Republic of China picked up a media statement on cases of pneumonia of unknown etiology (unknown cause) detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. The WHO Representative Office notified the IHR Regional Contact Point for the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific about the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission's statement and provided a translation of it.

That evening, WHO/Europe shared information received through the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), building on existing cooperative arrangements.

6 January 2020

WHO/Europe notifies countries and areas, and partners, of the level of risk to the Region.

WHO/Europe shared an initial WHO rapid risk assessment of the cluster of atypical pneumonia cases with ECDC to facilitate the sharing of information between WHO and ECDC risk assessment teams. The assessment was then shared with all countries and areas in the Region.

7 January 2020

Laboratory capacities in the Region are quickly assessed following Chinese authorities' identification of the atypical pneumonia as a novel coronavirus.

Chinese authorities identified the cause of the atypical pneumonia cases as a [novel coronavirus](#), temporarily named "2019-nCoV". WHO/Europe and ECDC moved quickly to identify [laboratory](#) needs and capacities in the Region. Laboratories are part of the strong influenza-related infrastructure built over decades and strengthened after the H1N1 pandemic of 2009, guided by the global [Pandemic Influenza Preparedness \(PIP\) Framework](#), and the WHO/Europe [Better Labs for Better Health](#) initiative.

9 January 2020

WHE initiates daily coordination meetings to guide readiness.

Seven coordination meetings took place before the official activation of the Incident Management Support Team (IMST) on 23 January, after which daily emergency management meetings took place. During the first meeting, the team discussed next steps, including roles and functions under the WHO Emergency Response Framework ([ERF](#)) and coordination with key European partners, such as ECDC and the European Commission.

WHO country and liaison offices and networks in the Region were engaged and provided with guidelines for media enquiries. An urgent announcement was distributed to [EVD-LabNet](#) members regarding the new virus.

10 January 2020

The first news stories and guidance documents are shared with Members States and the public on the novel coronavirus.

WHO/Europe began publishing regular [news stories](#) on the novel coronavirus (over 100 stories by 30 July 2020), telling stories that highlight the impact of WHO's work in the Region and individual countries and areas. These stories also give a voice to the people working behind the scenes, such as WHO staff, health care workers and donors. The topics of these stories have since included all components of the response.

[Advice](#) regarding international travel and trade in relation to the outbreak in China was posted on the WHO headquarters website.

12 January 2020

A new ECDC–WHO/Europe surveillance database is launched to harmonize reporting on cases and deaths.

A new ECDC–WHO/Europe novel coronavirus surveillance database, which had been developed over the previous days, went live.

13 January 2020

The first PCR assay for the novel coronavirus is published.

The first PCR assay was [published](#) by WHO/Europe.

The GOARN operational partnership network is activated.

GOARN was [activated](#) to ensure that all regional partners, including those of the European Region, were on alert and ready to respond when needed.

14 January 2020

Guidance on surveillance, laboratories, clinical management, infection prevention and control, and risk communication is shared with country and liaison offices.

A package of technical support materials was distributed to WHO country and liaison offices, internal experts and country expert networks beginning in early January. This first package, developed by teams that had begun work in early January, included early WHO guidance regarding the novel coronavirus and talking points for media enquiries.

16 January 2020

Periodic updates to Member States and areas on the most current testing methods, challenges, solutions, and referral laboratories are initiated.

The WHO/Europe High Threat Pathogens team launched its weekly updates to Member States and areas through the regional influenza laboratory network regarding the latest resources in the area of laboratory diagnostics for the new virus. The updates covered topics such as testing methods, challenges and solutions, and referral laboratories and were shared through the network for 14 weeks in both English and Russian.

17 January 2020

Engagement with the European Commission's Health Security Committee begins.

WHO/Europe participated in the first weekly meeting with the European Commission's [Health Security Committee](#) regarding the outbreak in Wuhan, China.

GOARN initiates the Go.Data platform in the context of the novel coronavirus.

The Institute of Public Health in Tirana, Albania, began the implementation process for the [Go.Data](#) field data collection platform developed by GOARN. Go.Data helps manage complex data in outbreaks such as COVID-19. The tool focuses on case data (including data received from labs on cases, hospitalization and other variables through a case investigation form) and contact data (including contact follow-up). The main outputs from this versatile platform are contact follow-up lists and chains of transmission.

21 January 2020

Updated information on the novel coronavirus is shared with all WHO country and liaison offices.

An updated package of materials and sources of information on the novel coronavirus was shared with all WHO country and liaison offices in Europe.

Laboratory-confirmed cases exported from China had by now been reported to WHO in Thailand (n=4), Japan (n=1) and Republic of Korea (n=1), so it was important for European Member States and areas to ensure that they were ready should cases occur in the European Region.

23 January 2020

The regional IMST is activated, a day before the first case in the European Region is confirmed.

Following WHO's risk assessment and declaration of a Grade 3 emergency, WHE in the Regional Office formally activated the IMST for the Region in relation to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus. The IMST supports all countries and areas in the Region and coordinates WHO's country-focused responses. Through the WHO health emergency preparedness and response hubs and country and liaison office teams, WHO/Europe has been providing direct support to countries and areas in coordination with United Nations country teams and other operational partners.

24 January 2020

Readiness of Member States and areas is reviewed.

Country and liaison offices reviewed readiness checklists and guidance for contingency planning via a teleconference convened by WHO/Europe.

European countries and areas are instructed to report on cases and deaths.

WHO requested IHR national focal points to report probable and confirmed cases of novel coronavirus infections within 24 hours of identification, as is legally required per Article 6 of the IHR (2005). Clear steps for reporting were shared along with case definitions and case report forms.

The first cases of the novel coronavirus in the Region are confirmed in France.

The [first three cases](#) of the novel coronavirus in the European Region were confirmed in France. The cases had travelled from China to France.

25 January 2020

WHO/Europe organizes a teleconference with France to discuss the details of the first cases in Europe.

WHO/Europe called for a teleconference with France to discuss the details of the three cases detected on 24 January, and the actions taken and planned. Representatives of ECDC were invited to join the teleconference, which became the first of the almost daily country teleconferences with affected Member States and areas organized by WHO/Europe jointly with ECDC during the following weeks.

“Novel coronavirus outbreak: Preparing now as one” – the Regional Director issues a first public statement regarding the novel coronavirus.

WHO/Europe issued the first public statement on the novel coronavirus: “[Novel coronavirus outbreak: Preparing now as one](#)”. The Regional Director’s statement outlined the importance of being ready at the local and national levels to detect cases, test samples and carry out clinical management. This was the first of 26 statements issued by the Regional Director as of 30 July 2020.

27 January 2020

Fifteen countries and areas in the Region are identified for priority support.

WHE in WHO/Europe identified 15 priority countries and areas in the regional response. Priority was based on hazard mapping, vulnerability and health system maturity. Countries and areas with other acute or protracted emergencies in the Region were also included as priority countries and areas, given the complexity of the response in those settings.

29 January 2020

WHO country and liaison offices receive the first daily digest of information and guidance on the novel coronavirus.

24/1: First cases of the novel coronavirus in France, the first in the Region

Note: In this document, information regarding cases reflects the most updated WHO data (continually monitored)

28/1: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Germany

WHO country and liaison offices received the first daily digest of new guidance, and a detailed update on the situation in the Region. The “daily digest” has become a key tool for ensuring that WHO country and liaison offices and divisions in WHO/Europe are kept abreast of guidance, tools and communications issues.

The first cluster of the novel coronavirus in Germany is confirmed, with local transmission in Bavaria.

Following the identification of a cluster of novel coronavirus cases in Bavaria, Germany, WHO/Europe and ECDC held almost daily calls with federal and state health authorities to share information on the evolution of the cluster and understand transmission pathways. This cluster was also linked to further cases in Spain.

30 January 2020

The WHO Director-General declares the novel coronavirus outbreak a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC).

After reconvening the [IHR Emergency Committee](#), WHO’s Director-General accepted the Committee’s advice and declared the COVID-19 emergency a [PHEIC](#).

Influenza networks in Europe are used as the platform for the response to the novel virus.

The regional influenza network began to report COVID-19 cases within 24 hours of detection to the Regional Office. The first shipment of COVID-19 test samples arrived at reference laboratories for rechecking. Forty-six shipments, containing 520 samples from 34 countries and areas, had taken place across the Region by the end of July 2020.

31 January 2020

WHO/Europe IMST develops a concept of operations (CONOPS) for the novel coronavirus in the Region.

After continuous assessment of the situation and in line with WHO’s ERF “no regrets” policy, a CONOPS was developed for the different levels of the Organization. The CONOPS defined how response activities would draw from the resources available at regional hubs serving the priority countries and areas. The CONOPS also identified immediate human resource needs and surge capacity to be mobilized from within and outside the Organization.

European EVD-LabNet/ECDC/WHO 2019-nCoV laboratory preparedness survey is completed.

By the end of January, 31 WHO Member States (24 of them members of the European Union or European Economic Area), countries and areas had established molecular testing capacity for the novel coronavirus.

1 February 2020

Six European referral laboratories are identified as being ready to support countries with testing.

WHO/Europe and partners established an initial roster of six laboratories in the Region to act as regional referral laboratories to provide testing support. These laboratories were located in France,

30/1: Director-General declares the novel coronavirus outbreak a PHEIC

30/1: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Finland

31/1: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Italy

1/2: First cases of the novel coronavirus in the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United Kingdom

Germany, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Since then, the roster has been expanded, and such facilities are now called “reference labs” and function under terms of reference agreed with WHO. A network of nationally designated laboratories for testing for 2019-nCoV was also activated, primarily building on the existing laboratory network within the Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System ([GISRS](#)).

2/2: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Spain

3 February 2020

The WHO Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan is rolled out.

A draft [Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan \(SPRP\)](#) was published by WHO. Based on an updated WHO strategy published in April 2020, a European Region-specific strategy was developed and updated as the situation developed.

Risk communication in countries is strengthened via a new online library.

To improve dissemination of risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) materials (e.g. posters, graphics for social media and animated videos), WHO/Europe established a publicly accessible online library of resources. Over 1200 files and resources in 40 languages had been shared as of 31 July 2020.

4 February 2020

WHO/Europe convenes a call with WHO representatives, sharing key messages to ensure readiness in countries.

WHO/Europe convened a call with WHO representatives in the Region to share key messages as more countries confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus, in order to (1) prepare countries for imported cases, (2) align country plans with the global SPRP, (3) prepare for scale-up, (4) emphasize RCCE, and (5) ensure WHO country and liaison office readiness.

4/2: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Belgium

The Regional Director shares his first original tweet mentioning the novel coronavirus.

In his [first tweet](#) mentioning the novel coronavirus, the Regional Director shared his vision for health in Europe – “United action for better health”. By 30 July 2020, he had written 198 original [tweets](#).

6 February 2020

Member States and areas receive the first weekly update on international travel and trade restrictions implemented in countries and areas.

The first weekly update on international travel and trade restrictions that had been implemented in the European Region in the context of the novel coronavirus was shared via the Event Information Site (a restricted platform), along with the public health rationales for such measures.

First joint regional WHO/Europe–ECDC novel coronavirus network call is held.

The first regular joint regional network virtual call organized jointly by WHO/Europe and ECDC took place. These calls have involved all Member States and areas, include sharing of country experiences, and have been conducted in English and Russian. Three networks have been

established, involving national experts on surveillance and epidemiology, virology and sero-epidemiology. The calls have been held every 1–2 weeks, chaired on a rotating basis by WHO and ECDC.

7 February 2020

A WHO/Europe website housing the latest guidance, data and stories on the novel coronavirus goes live.

Since January, [over 100 guidance documents](#), stories and products have been shared with Member States and areas and WHO staff, and housed publicly on the new [website](#) and [intranet](#) pages launched by WHO/Europe for the novel coronavirus. Over time, technical units have continued to develop guidance, training materials and tools that address a range of topics, such as human rights and vulnerable populations. These products have addressed the impact of COVID-19 on specific groups and settings, including schoolchildren, people with disabilities, refugees and migrants, pregnant mothers and newborns, elderly people and residents of long-term care facilities, people in prisons, and people with mental health problems.

9 February 2020

First WHO/Europe country mission is deployed.

In a first country support mission, WHO experts were deployed to Kyrgyzstan: operational planning (9–22 February), lab support (23–29 February), and hospital preparedness (15–29 February).

This and subsequent WHO expert missions and partner deployments (over 116 as of 30 July 2020) have provided tailored support for planning, preparedness and response and have covered topics such as clinical pathways and breaking the transmission chain; rapid response teams; data collection, information management and reporting; command-control and coordination mechanisms; preparedness, readiness and response; procurement and distribution of essential supplies; knowledge exchange among countries and areas and institutions; advocacy, engagement and risk communication, community engagement and behavioural insight; needs-based and solidarity-focused planning; and resource mobilization.

10 February 2020

WHO missions deploy to Serbia and Tajikistan, and Kosovo.¹

Upon request, WHO/Europe deployed hospital readiness experts to Serbia (10–22 February), to Tajikistan (10–24 February), and to Kosovo¹ (10–14 February).

11 February 2020

The research and development (R&D) process for diagnostics, vaccines and therapeutics for the novel coronavirus is accelerated in an R&D Blueprint meeting.

The WHO/Europe IMST took part in the [R&D Blueprint](#) meeting at WHO headquarters. The meeting brought together experts to accelerate and support research efforts geared towards containing the

¹ All references to Kosovo in this document should be understood to be in the context of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

spread of the epidemic, facilitating care for those affected, and facilitating learning from the current response to better prepare for any future outbreak.

The disease caused by the novel coronavirus is named COVID-19.

Following [best practices](#), WHO announced that the disease caused by the novel coronavirus would be named [COVID-19](#) and the virus named SARS-CoV2.

12 February 2020

WHO/Europe launches a COVID-19 operational readiness checklist for Member States and areas.

An operational readiness [checklist](#) for COVID-19 was shared with European countries and areas to facilitate readiness at the local and national levels to detect sick people, test samples of those suspected of having COVID-19, manage patients adequately, maximize infection prevention and control, and maintain open communication with the public.

13 February 2020

The Regional Director has first bilateral call with a Member State.

The Regional Director convened a bilateral call with the Prime Minister and Minister of Health of Kazakhstan to discuss COVID-19 readiness. The Regional Director has since conducted 27 bilateral high-level discussions with European leaders.

GOARN mission deploys to Kyrgyzstan.

A GOARN hospital preparedness mission took place in Kyrgyzstan (13–29 February).

14 February 2020

Practical steps for quarantine are shared with WHO country and liaison offices.

WHO/Europe developed supplementary information for WHO country teams to support [WHO's key considerations for repatriation and quarantine](#). The supplementary note provided practical steps to be followed by the ministries of health on the subject of quarantine.

15 February 2020

WHO mission deploys to Montenegro.

A hospital readiness mission arrived in Montenegro, staying until 18 February.

17 February 2020

WHO mission deploys to Armenia.

A WHO mission arrived in Armenia, staying until 21 February.

WHO mission deploys to Azerbaijan.

A laboratory support mission arrived in Azerbaijan, assisting the country to put in place testing capacity for COVID-19, staying until 21 February.

18 February 2020

First WHO/Europe shipment of COVID-19 testing kits arrives in countries and areas.

PCR testing kits to help bolster testing capacities in Member States arrived in Albania, Lithuania, North Macedonia and the Republic of Moldova. To date, 5584 RT-PCR test kits have been sent to 29 countries and areas.

20 February 2020

New WHO/Europe online dashboard for COVID-19 data goes live.

An English and Russian language [dashboard](#) was established on the WHO/Europe website, providing regular daily updates on COVID-19 in the Region, and was shared with partner networks. The dashboard has become one of WHO/Europe's most valued information sharing tools concerning the evolution of the pandemic, with close to 8.2 million visits between 20 February and 12 August 2020. The dashboard and the underlying database have provided the daily number of new cases and deaths in 54 of the 55 IHR States Parties and seven areas in the Region. The content of the dashboard has been continuously improved and expanded ever since its inception, and a new map providing subnational data was added in August 2020.

21 February 2020

WHO mission deploys to Georgia.

An operational planning support mission arrived in Georgia, staying until 28 February.

22 February 2020

Rapid spread of COVID-19 detected in northern Italy.

After alarming news on 21 February of 14 cases of COVID-19 in the Lombardy Region of Italy without any known link to previously detected cases or any travel link to China, the WHO/Europe IMST initiated through IHR channels a videoconference with Italy for 22 February, also inviting ECDC. The videoconference was attended by representatives of the Ministry of Health of Italy, Lombardy regional health authorities, ECDC, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, senior WHE leadership from WHO headquarters and the WHO/Europe IMST.

During the teleconference, WHO and ECDC received an update from the Ministry of Health of Italy and health authorities of the Lombardy Region on the increased number of COVID-19 cases, including a timeline of events and the required support from WHO and ECDC.

24 February 2020

First WHO rapid response mission deploys to Italy.

A WHO [rapid response mission](#) took place in Italy. The country had been experiencing a rapid increase in cases in the previous days. WHO and ECDC experts joined forces with the Italian Ministry of Health and the Istituto Superiore di Sanità to work on clinical management, infection prevention and control, surveillance and risk communication, with a focus on limiting further human-to-human transmission. The mission was extended beyond its original dates to provide additional support in the area of infection prevention and control. A [report](#) was published about the mission. The Regional Director travelled to Italy on 25 February and held

22/2: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Israel

24/2: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Switzerland

high-level meetings and a joint [press conference](#) with the Minister of Health of Italy and the European Commissioner to support the response.

Following the mission, a need was identified for longer-term engagement and collaboration with the response across Italy. WHO therefore repurposed its WHO European Office for Investment for Health and Development, Venice, Italy, appointing an emergency coordinator to oversee operations, and four additional international WHO personnel, focusing on strategic health system management, clinical management, infection prevention and control, and surveillance and epidemiology.

WHO missions deploy to Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro, as well as Kosovo:¹

- Hub coordinator and points of entry support mission deployed to Azerbaijan (24–28 February)
- Hub coordinator mission deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina (24–29 February)
- Technical support mission deployed to Montenegro (24–29 February)
- Technical support mission deployed to Kosovo¹ (24–29 February).

WHO/Europe issues a hospital emergency management checklist for COVID-19.

The [checklist](#) was distributed to Member States and areas, along with materials on hospital emergency response planning developed by the readiness function of the IMST. The aim was to support hospital readiness and preparedness, thereby ensuring that the prolonged nature of the COVID-19 outbreak in the Region would not lead to the spread of disease and increase in service demands that in turn have the potential to overwhelm the capacity of hospitals and the health system at large.

WHO/Europe and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Europe and Central Asia Regional Office initiate collaboration on RCCE.

The joint work includes RCCE projects, strategies and networks relevant to the country response, such as [HealthBuddy](#) and the United Nations country team strategy template.

25 February 2020

Countries share best practices on infection prevention and control, with a spotlight on COVID-19.

Infection prevention and control focal points and experts from 15 Member States took part in a two-day [meeting](#) in Copenhagen, the second best-practices meeting on the implementation of the core components of infection prevention and control programmes.

26 February 2020

Laboratory Task Force for High Threat Pathogens convenes its first meeting in the context of COVID-19.

The European Region Laboratory Task Force for High Threat Pathogens held its first [meeting](#) in the context of COVID-19. Members and partners had the opportunity to provide information on COVID-19 globally and in the Region, including laboratory readiness.

26/2: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Austria and Croatia

¹ All references to Kosovo in this document should be understood to be in the context of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

27 February 2020

An emergency simulation exercise on COVID-19 takes place in Georgia.

WHO supported simulation exercises on COVID-19 in Georgia. More exercises were held in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

28 February 2020

WHO assesses the world as being at very high risk for the spread of COVID-19.

WHO's global risk assessment was reviewed for the fourth time as COVID-19 spread. The review raised the level of risk to public health associated with COVID-19 to very high risk, for all countries and areas.

29 February 2020

WHO deploys mission to Uzbekistan.

A WHO hospital readiness mission arrived in Uzbekistan, staying until 7 March.

1 March 2020

WHO/Europe expands its media team on COVID-19.

As the European Region became the epicentre of the pandemic, the world's media focused on WHO and Europe, and the Media Office received hundreds of enquiries from agencies such as Reuters, AP, AFP, DPA, Xinhua, Aljazeera and RIA Novosti, as well as international media outlets such as the International New York Times, BBC World Service, and RFI. Every week, the media team answered an average of 350 media enquiries, handled over 100 interview requests, and prepared over 10 interviews.

WHO deploys mission to Tajikistan.

A laboratory support mission took place on 1–11 March to support implementation of laboratory testing capacity for COVID-19 in Tajikistan.

Lockdowns and restrictions on international travel begin across Europe.

During the first half of March, several countries and areas in the Region began to implement widespread measures, including lockdowns and restrictions on domestic and international traffic. The inability to travel both domestically and internationally had a huge impact on WHO's response operations – particularly WHO's capacity to deploy surge staff and other personnel, including staff of partner organizations, and to provide supplies to countries and areas. This affected operations across Europe for several months.

2 March 2020

WHO/Europe convenes ministerial and ambassadorial briefings to prioritize country readiness for the Region.

Briefings were held during which the Regional Director made a [statement](#) regarding the continued transmission of COVID-19 in the Region. The Regional Director outlined three priorities for country readiness: (1) protecting health workers, (2) engaging communities to protect people who are most

27/2: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Denmark, Georgia, Greece, North Macedonia, Norway and Romania

28/2: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Estonia, Lithuania and the Netherlands

29/2: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Iceland and San Marino

By the end of February: The European Region had over [1000](#) reported cases of the novel coronavirus

1/3: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Ireland, Luxembourg and Monaco

2/3: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Armenia and Czechia

at risk, and (3) protecting the most vulnerable countries and areas by doing our utmost to contain outbreaks in countries and areas with the capacity to do so.

WHO deploys missions to Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

A laboratory support mission deployed to Armenia on 2–6 March to support implementation of laboratory testing capacity for COVID-19.

A laboratory support mission deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina to support implementation of laboratory testing capacity for COVID-19 (2–4 March).

A hospital readiness mission deployed to Tajikistan (2–11 March), focusing on four institutions (Dushanbe City Clinical Infectious Disease Hospital, Tursunzade Central District Hospital, Hissar Central District Hospital and the Dushanbe City Clinical Children’s Infectious Disease Hospital).

A laboratory support mission deployed to Uzbekistan to support implementation of laboratory testing capacity for COVID-19 (2–4 March).

3 March 2020

WHO deploys mission to Ukraine.

A clinical support mission deployed to Ukraine (3–6 March).

4 March 2020

WHO deploys mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A hospital preparedness mission deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina (4–6 March).

5 March 2020

First personal protective equipment (PPE) shipments are delivered to priority countries and areas in Europe.

Health care workers in countries and areas of the Region received a first shipment of PPE, which was procured with the support of partners including Azerbaijan, Germany, Kuwait, the United Kingdom, the Central Emergency Response Fund and the European Union. By the end of July 2020, 192 shipments of protective items had been delivered to priority countries and areas, with 123 in progress, overall including 7.8 million gloves, 37.8 million masks, 5 million respirators, as well as protective goggles and gowns.

WHO/Europe convenes all programmes at the Regional Office to engage in the response.

WHO/Europe brought together all programmes of the Regional Office to engage in the COVID-19 response. This led to the development of cross-divisional approaches to COVID-19, using the dual-track approach to respond to COVID-19 while supporting countries in maintaining essential services.

WHO deploys mission and hosts simulation exercise in Kazakhstan.

A WHO mission deployed to Kazakhstan (5–6 March) and facilitated a simulation exercise to prepare for COVID-19.

3/3: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Andorra, Latvia and Portugal

4/3: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Gibraltar, Poland and Ukraine

5/3: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Hungary, Liechtenstein and Slovenia

6 March 2020

WHO/Europe switches to remote training and capacity-building for COVID-19.

A first capacity-building webinar on clinical management was provided to health workers in Kosovo.¹

An RCCE webinar series was launched for WHO offices in countries and areas, ministries of health, public health authorities, UNICEF, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and other national and regional partner agency staff, with expert presentations from WHO and key partners including UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and IFRC. An initial series ran for 13 weeks with over 500 participants. Clinical management and infection prevention and control webinars started being conducted for different countries and areas, tailored to their needs.

GOARN experts deploy to support WHO/Europe.

GOARN lab and epidemiology experts joined the Regional Office team (6 March–30 April). Since March and up to the end of July 2020, there had been over 10 separate GOARN deployments to support WHO/Europe's COVID-19 response.

First Regional Director multilateral discussion takes place.

The Regional Director participated in a meeting [of](#) regional partners on the COVID-19 response. There have been more such meetings in the subsequent months.

7 March 2020

WHO deploys missions to Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Hospital readiness missions deployed to Armenia (7–13 March) and Azerbaijan (7–16 March).

8 March 2020

WHO deploys mission to North Macedonia.

A WHO laboratory support mission supported implementation of laboratory testing capacity for COVID-19 (8–9 March).

9 March 2020

New behavioural insights tool launched.

In partnership with Erfurt University in Germany, WHO/Europe launched a [behavioural insights research tool](#) for the regional and global collection of data on risk perceptions, public knowledge, trust and behaviours. As of July 2020, the data collected had contributed directly to the response in 27 countries and areas in the Region. WHO/Europe provides direct support to 17 of those Member States and areas for implementation of the tool.

6/3: First cases of the novel coronavirus in the Faroe Islands

7/3: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Malta, Serbia, Slovakia, and the Holy See

8/3: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Bulgaria and the Republic of Moldova

¹ All references to Kosovo in this document should be understood to be in the context of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

WHO deploys missions to Azerbaijan, Georgia, North Macedonia, Serbia, Tajikistan and Ukraine.

A team of WHO experts deployed to [Azerbaijan](#) (9–13 March) to work with the national response committee and develop a 3- to 6-month [national preparedness and response plan for COVID-19](#), covering surveillance, hospital preparedness, clinical management, infection prevention and control, RCCE, and points of entry.

In addition, hospital preparedness missions deployed to Georgia (9–30 March) and Serbia (9–15 March); a technical support mission took place in North Macedonia (9–14 March); an infection prevention control mission deployed to Tajikistan (9–15 March); and a laboratory support mission deployed to Ukraine (9–13 March).

10 March 2020

WHO laboratory support missions deploy to Montenegro and Uzbekistan.

Laboratory support missions deployed to Montenegro (10–13 March) and Uzbekistan (10–15 March) to support implementation of laboratory testing capacity for COVID-19.

11 March 2020

WHO Director-General announces that COVID-19 is a pandemic.

During a press conference, the WHO Director-General stated that the COVID-19 outbreak could be characterized as a [pandemic](#).

WHO mission deploys to Uzbekistan.

A mission providing laboratory support arrived in Uzbekistan (11–15 March).

12 March 2020

WHO/Europe convenes the Twenty-seventh Standing Committee of the Regional Committee for Europe.

At the third session of the Committee, the Regional Director made a [statement](#) on the COVID-19 situation in Europe.

First Regional Director multilateral (subregional) discussion with ministers of health of western Balkan Member States takes place.

The Regional Director took part in a multilateral (subregional) [discussion](#) regarding COVID-19 with ministers of health of western Balkan Member States. There have been 12 such discussions with other subregional networks since then.

13 March 2020

WHE convenes a new COVID-19 coordination platform with 11 United Nations agencies and the Red Cross Movement.

10/3: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Cyprus and Guernsey

11/3: WHO announces that COVID-19 is a pandemic

12/3: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Turkey

13/3: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Kazakhstan and Jersey

The coordination platform, which is now known as the Regional WHO-UN-RCM Coordination Platform for COVID-19 enhances coordination at country level to ensure a multisectoral response, facilitated at the regional level, harmonizing WHO and United Nations agency activities in implementing the WHO [SPRP](#). The platform had met on an additional six occasions by the end of July 2020, addressing different themes of the COVID-19 response at each meeting.

15 March 2020

The Regional Office switches to a remote working modality.

This change in working modality reflected the lockdowns occurring across the Region at the time, and particularly the advice issued by the Government of Denmark, where the Regional Office is hosted.

WHO/Europe publishes interim guidance for prisons.

An interim guidance document regarding preparedness for, and prevention and control of, COVID-19 in prisons and other places of detention was [published](#) on the WHO/Europe site.

16 March 2020

GOARN operational review for COVID-19 takes place.

WHO/Europe and GOARN partners from the Region participated in an operational review for COVID-19.

WHO deploys laboratory support mission to Armenia and Kazakhstan.

A laboratory support mission deployed to Kazakhstan to support implementation of laboratory testing capacity for COVID-19 (16–21 March). A mission deployed to Armenia (16 March–14 April).

17 March 2020

Laboratories across Europe are invited to participate in external quality assessment.

Eighty-one laboratories from 51 European countries and areas were invited to participate in the external quality assessment of their COVID-19 testing capacity.

WHO deploys mission to Kosovo.¹

A mission deployed to Kosovo¹ (17–19 March) to support clinical management and surveillance capacities.

The Regional Director starts weekly press briefings.

The Regional Director started weekly press briefings in English, while Russian language press conferences also took place regularly from 3 June, engaging hundreds of journalists and citizens.

16/3: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Albania and Kosovo¹

17/3: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Montenegro

¹ All references to Kosovo in this document should be understood to be in the context of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

18 March 2020

WHO deploys mission to Georgia.

A rapid assessment of testing and treatment for COVID-19 took place in Sukhumi, Georgia, in close coordination with the United Nations Development Programme, given its established presence in the Caucasus region (18–20 March).

WHO launches the global Solidarity Trial.

By the end of March 2020, 76 countries globally, including 21 countries and areas in the European Region, had expressed an interest in participating in the WHO-coordinated [Solidarity Trial](#). Albania, Italy, North Macedonia, Norway, the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Spain were already in the final stage of approvals for the trial.

20 March 2020

WHO/Europe publishes guidance and hosts call with countries and areas on routine immunization services.

WHO/Europe published guidance on routine immunization services during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Region and conducted calls with 44 Member States and areas to (1) assess the status of immunization services, (2) provide a platform to exchange information and lessons learned, and (3) provide countries and areas with tailored technical assistance and guidance.

WHO/Europe begins weekly risk communications check-ins with countries and areas.

WHO/Europe scaled up country and liaison office RCCE support by establishing bilateral weekly check-ins with 25 countries and areas. On average, each week WHO/Europe responds to support requests from seven countries and areas. In April these were supplemented with weekly “meet the Communication Pillar” webinars with country and liaison offices to provide more targeted support to their COVID-19 responses.

23 March 2020

WHO deploys mission to Uzbekistan.

A laboratory support mission deployed to Uzbekistan (23–31 March).

24 March 2020

WHO revises its regional response structure to meet evolving needs in countries and areas.

WHO moved from short-term response needs towards a sustained response. The new structure further engaged staff from across WHO/Europe as the infection spread eastwards across Europe.

20/3: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Kyrgyzstan, Greenland and Isle of Man

25 March 2020

WHO/Europe publishes interim guidance for refugee and migrant health.

An interim [guidance](#) document was published, intended for use by health authorities in guiding the actions taken by health care providers for refugees and migrants living in all types of settings, in relation to COVID-19.

26 March 2020

The Regional Director requests all country and liaison offices to repurpose their work to COVID-19.

The Regional Director reaffirmed and strengthened the implementation of emergency measures under the ERF through the full repurposing of country and liaison offices towards emergency activities.

29 March 2020

WHO deploys mission to Spain.

Dr Bruce Aylward (Special Adviser on Organizational Change to the Director-General) led a [mission to Spain](#) (29 March–3 April) to learn from the rapid outbreak of COVID-19 in the country and help advise on both the national and international responses. The mission included visits to the capital and three regions, as well as to several health care facilities. It highlighted the need for countries and areas to understand that the virus can overwhelm even the most robust health systems, resulting in the need to entirely reconfigure health sectors in response.

30 March 2020

COVID-19 Solidarity Programme launched for the six Eastern Partnership countries.

The European Commission supported WHO's efforts on the ground with a €30 million contribution, announced on 30 March, for six Eastern Partnership countries that are also Member States of WHO/Europe – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine – to meet their immediate needs in responding to COVID-19.

31 March 2020

A regional approach is adopted to address vulnerable populations across Europe.

This approach provided the basis for WHO/Europe to provide targeted support to countries and areas and health workers on psychological support, gender, and violence reduction; to set up a COVID-19 surveillance project in prisons; to address the needs of people living with disabilities, leaving no one behind; and to provide front-line service providers with technical support through a variety of networks in the Region.

By the end of March (select figures):

WHO/Europe had delivered essential supplies to 19 Member States and areas:

Nineteen Member States and areas were provided with essential supplies: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Kosovo.¹

WHO/Europe had expanded the reach of capacity-building training courses:

As an example, 4479 health care workers had received virtual training on infection prevention and control, and on clinical management, in Albania, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

1 April 2020

WHO/Europe works with Global Shapers youth network to combat misinformation.

[WHO/Europe worked in partnership with Global Shapers](#), a worldwide network of over 9000 young, engaged and highly educated volunteers, to provide youth in the Region with accurate and timely information about COVID-19 and to monitor trends, concerns and rumours. The Shapers have engaged over 65 000 youth in their extended network so far.

WHO/Europe shares recommendations and action points for strengthening health systems.

Countries and areas received [recommendations](#) and [action points](#) for strengthening the response to COVID-19 by their health systems.

2 April 2020

The European COVID-19 [Health System Response Monitor](#) is launched.

The new platform launched on 2 April is a joint undertaking by WHO/Europe, the European Commission and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies. The monitor compiles and analyses country information collected by the WHO IMST public health emergency measures pillar.

3 April 2020

Priority countries and areas receive guidance on developing national strategies to ensure compliance with health protection measures.

WHO/Europe launched an RCCE strategy template for national health authorities to help countries and areas ensure that people comply with health protection measures recommended by the health authorities and adopt protective behaviours. So far, 17 out of 25 targeted countries and areas have finalized or are developing the strategy.

Subsequently, on 30 April, a United Nations Country Team RCCE strategy template was launched and has been implemented by 12 countries and areas (as of 22 June 2020).

By the end of March: The European Region had more than 400 000 cases of the novel coronavirus

¹ All references to Kosovo in this document should be understood to be in the context of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

5 April 2020

WHO deploys missions to Uzbekistan.

A laboratory support mission deployed to Uzbekistan (5–10 April).

WHO deploys mission to Belarus.

An expert mission providing laboratory, operational planning and RCCE support deployed to [Belarus](#) (5–8 April). As the COVID-19 outbreak in Belarus entered the community transmission phase, the mission recommended the introduction of community-wide steps to increase physical distancing. A [report](#) was subsequently published.

6 April 2020

WHO/Europe issues tools on forecast surge capacity and essential supply needs.

WHO/Europe issued two technical guidance documents regarding health systems strengthening as part of the response to COVID-19. One contained recommendations on creating [surge capacity for acute and intensive care](#), and the other on the [supply of essential medicines and health technologies](#). These documents were published on the WHO/Europe website in English and Russian.

8 April 2020

“Where do we stand today on COVID-19, and what have we learned?” – the Regional Director makes a statement to the Region in the 15th week of the global battle with the novel coronavirus.

In the 15th week of the battle with COVID-19, with over 50 000 deaths and over 680 000 cases, the Regional Director made a [statement](#) to the public on lessons learned in the Region so far.

WHO/Europe publishes a position paper on breastfeeding and COVID-19.

A paper was [published](#) sharing guidance for safe breastfeeding.

9 April 2020

WHO/Europe shares updated guidance for COVID-19 in prisons.

A new checklist to evaluate preparedness, prevention and control of COVID-19 in prisons and other places of detention was [published](#) and shared with Member States and areas.

14 April 2020

WHO shared a COVID-19 strategy update.

WHO issued a [COVID-19 strategy update](#). Based on this updated global strategy, a Region-specific strategy was developed and updated as the situation developed.

15 April 2020

WHO/Europe launches a new weekly newsletter.

The weekly WHO/Europe COVID-19 [newsletter](#) was launched, providing countries and areas in the Region and the general public with a weekly overview of the COVID-19 situation in the Region, as well as WHO's ongoing preparedness and response activities and guidance for Member States and areas, health care workers, and the public.

16 April 2020

Steps for a safe “new normal” are outlined by the Regional Director.

The Regional Director made a [statement](#) to the public regarding the transition to a “new normal” in the Region amid the ongoing pandemic, and how this must be guided by public health principles.

17 April 2020

Regular calls are initiated with United Nations agencies regarding RCCE.

WHE initiated regular calls on RCCE with UNICEF, UNHCR and International Organization for Migration regional offices, with a focus on vulnerable populations.

18 April 2020

WHO/Europe distributes guidance on the continuation of essential health care services.

Following the issuance of this interim [guidance](#), a methodology was developed for rapid situation analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on essential health services delivery and a four-step approach to support countries and areas in responding to their needs was established.

19 April 2020

WHO-certified EMT from Poland deploys to Kyrgyzstan.

An EMT from the Polish Centre for International Aid was deployed with WHO support for a 10-day [mission to Kyrgyzstan](#) (19–28 April). The Polish clinicians included three anaesthesiologists, three paramedics, a general practitioner and an intensive care nurse.

20 April 2020

The Regional Director urges countries and areas to maintain routine vaccination during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On the occasion of European Immunization Week 2020, the Regional Director made a [statement](#) to the public to reiterate the importance of the continuation of routine immunization services throughout the Region.

22 April 2020

WHO/Europe shares guidance for countries and areas on reducing the adverse financial effects of the pandemic.

WHO/Europe [published](#) key health financing actions that countries and areas in Europe can take to reduce the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic as part of a broader health system response.

23 April 2020

New partner coordination is established with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe regarding points of entry and transport.

Coordination was established with the [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe](#) regarding points of entry and transport responses to COVID-19 in Europe, further strengthening capacities in the Region.

24 April 2020

WHO/Europe issues advice to countries and areas on the gradual easing of COVID-19 measures.

WHO/Europe [published](#) key considerations for the gradual easing of the lockdown restrictions introduced by many countries and areas in response to the spread of COVID-19 across the Region.

25 April 2020

A new weekly COVID-19 surveillance report is launched.

A weekly surveillance report was [launched](#). Weekly data and analyses updates on new cases, new deaths, and a breakdown of cases based on age, gender, and various characteristics such as underlying conditions and occupation have been included.

27 April 2020

WHO deploys mission to Italy on safe hospitals for COVID-19.

An expert in safe and rational design of health facilities was [deployed](#) to Bologna and Puglia in Italy for one month to support the establishment of a severe acute respiratory infection treatment centre.

30 April 2020

WHO/Europe sends out guidance for responsible media reporting.

Some 200 journalists received a guidance package issued by WHO/Europe for the media on accurate, ethical and responsible reporting. This was followed by a targeted briefing to over 100 English- and Russian-speaking journalists.

1 May 2020

WHO/Europe shares guidance with community pharmacists as more people seek advice on management of symptoms.

Countries and areas received [technical guidance](#) to support pharmacists and other staff working in community pharmacies on the issues raised by the COVID-19 outbreak.

WHO deploys rapid response mission to Tajikistan.

By the end of April:

The European Region had more than 1 million confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus

1/5: First cases of the novel coronavirus in Tajikistan

All European Member States and areas except Turkmenistan have now

A WHO [mission deployed to Tajikistan](#) on a humanitarian flight following an invitation from the Minister of Health and Social Protection of the Population of Tajikistan. The objectives of the mission were to understand the response measures currently being taken to manage the outbreak and to provide guidance on surveillance, clinical management, infection prevention and control, laboratory and points of entry, and RCCE. A [report](#) was published.

4 May 2020

A new regular operational update for Europe is launched.

The first regular [COVID-19 WHO European Region operational update](#) was published. These updates are publicly available summaries of the global and regional situations, emergency public health measures taken across the Region, WHO/Europe's response, and country-level gaps and challenges.

5 May 2020

First-of-its kind virtual mission to Armenia takes place.

A [first-of-its kind virtual mission](#) to Armenia took place via Zoom (5–7 May). Experts from WHO/Europe and the Robert Koch Institute worked with Armenian health authorities on assessing the COVID-19 situation and offered advice on the strategy for easing COVID-19 measures. Some 400 mission participants subsequently worked together in a virtual space over the course of two weeks.

6 May 2020

The first Central European Initiative (CEI)–WHO functional task force kicks off.

The [CEI–WHO task force](#), a functional partnership, convened by the CEI and WHO/Europe, began work. On 15 May, the Regional Director also [addressed](#) CEI Heads of State to underline the importance of cooperation, solidarity and trust as principles for guiding the response.

WHO/Europe co-convenes with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and Israel a joint virtual dialogue with countries and areas.

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, WHO/Europe and Israel held a joint [virtual dialogue](#) with 55 IHR States Parties from the European Region regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, as a means of sharing experiences and strategies for response, transition and resilience.

WHO deploys mission to Tajikistan.

GOARN partners were deployed to Tajikistan in several follow-up missions (6–16 May, 13–27 June, and 22 July–13 September).

7 May 2020

WHO/Europe and ECDC brief countries and areas on the latest rapid risk assessment and modelling methods.

IHR national focal points across Europe were briefed on the latest rapid risk assessment and modelling work related to COVID-19 in a meeting organized by ECDC and WHO.

The Regional Director stresses the importance of addressing interpersonal violence during the pandemic.

The Regional Director made a [statement](#) to the press regarding the necessity for governments, local authorities and communities to be aware of and work towards preventing violence during the pandemic.

8 May 2020

WHO/Europe shares guidance regarding health in hot weather during the pandemic.

New information sheets for preventing the adverse health effects of hot weather while protecting oneself from COVID-19 were [published](#).

11 May 2020

WHO/Europe shares updated risk communication tools.

Countries and areas received an expanded RCCE strategy template, with a new chapter focusing on the transition out of lockdown.

12 May 2020

WHO/Europe shares guidance for people in prison and for people visiting prisons.

New factsheets for [people visiting prisons](#) and for [people in prisons](#) were published.

18 May 2020

European leaders express the need for a strong WHO at the Seventy-third World Health Assembly.

A [draft resolution](#) on the COVID-19 response was proposed at the [Seventy-third World Health Assembly](#) (which was held virtually for the first time in history) and adopted the next day. Participants included numerous high-level representatives, including many from the European Region, such as the President of the European Commission, the German Chancellor, the French President, the Italian Prime Minister and the Spanish President.

The [HealthBuddy](#) chatbot is rolled out to countries and areas in Europe and central Asia.

HealthBuddy, is a multilingual interactive chatbot intended to help countries and areas in the Region to access accurate information and counter misinformation surrounding the virus. This was a flagship collaboration between WHO/Europe and the UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office. The chatbot content has been made available in seven languages thus far.

First weekly laboratory workshop is held.

The first in a series of weekly workshops was conducted to allow laboratory specialists to address technical questions and share experiences; 15 such workshops had been undertaken by 31 July 2020.

19 May 2020

WHO/Europe trains personnel on the management of suspected cases at ground crossings in Turkmenistan.

Border control personnel in Turkmenistan were trained on the management of COVID-19 suspected cases at ground crossings over a two-day joint Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe –WHO online training course.

20 May 2020

WHO/Europe releases guidance on providing palliative care during the COVID-19 pandemic, based on experiences from Spain.

A guidance document was [published](#), sharing experiences from Spain with regard to the continuation of palliative care during the pandemic.

21 May 2020

WHO/Europe releases guidance on managing and preventing COVID-19 in long-term care settings.

A technical guidance document was [published](#), identifying 10 policy objectives for decision-makers, policy-makers, and national or regional health authorities as they strive to prevent and manage the COVID-19 pandemic in long-term care settings.

27 May 2020

WHO deploys virtual mission to Kosovo.¹

WHO deployed a virtual mission to Kosovo¹ in collaboration with the Public Health Authority of Kosovo¹ (27–28 May). The mission focused on reviewing current disease control measures, identifying the main activities to be reinforced to ensure health service continuity in Kosovo,¹ and undertaking RCCE.

28 May 2020

WHO deploys mission to Georgia.

A rapid response mission, including laboratory support, deployed to Sukhumi, Georgia (28–30 May).

29 May 2020

WHO/Europe releases guidance on ensuring people-centred diabetes care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A guidance document was [published](#), sharing experiences from Portugal.

¹ All references to Kosovo in this document should be understood to be in the context of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

WHO/Europe releases guidance on ensuring continuity of cancer care while responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A guidance document was [published](#), sharing experiences from Kyrgyzstan.

30 May 2020

WHO deploys mission to Italy.

A hospital preparedness mission deployed to Italy (30 May–31 July). With the changing epidemiological situation in Italy, support was now being directed towards repurposing facilities for regular clinical service provision while maintaining high levels of readiness for COVID management activities during the post-acute phase.

By the end of May (select figures):

WHO/Europe had expanded the reach of its capacity-building training courses:

For example, 9705 health care workers had been trained via webinars on clinical management and infection prevention and control by the WHO/Europe IMST.

WHO/Europe had continued to support the procurement of essential supplies to countries:

Procurement support for essential supplies had been provided for Armenia, Georgia, Italy, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Tajikistan and Turkey.

WHO/Europe had continued to support and to monitor readiness in countries; for example:

- 100% of countries (53) had COVID-19 laboratory facilities;
- 66% of countries (35) had a COVID-19 RCCE plan according to their transmission scenario;
- 79% of countries (42) had a functional multisectoral, multipartner coordination mechanism for COVID-19 preparedness and response; and
- 45% of countries (24) had a COVID-19 national preparedness and response plan.

1 June 2020

WHO/Europe shares guidance on adapting services, based on experiences from Italy.

A guidance document for health care professionals was [published](#) regarding adaptation of services to respond effectively to coronary artery and cerebrovascular disease during the COVID-19 pandemic, based on experiences from Italy.

3 June 2020

WHO/Europe shares guidance regarding infection prevention and control among children and adolescents in detention facilities.

A factsheet was [published](#) regarding children and adolescents deprived of liberty in the context of the COVID-19 response in the Region.

By the end of May: The European Region had more than 2 million confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus

WHO deploys mission to Tajikistan.

A second rapid response mission to Tajikistan (3 June–3 July) provided emergency coordination, surveillance and laboratory support.

6 June 2020

WHO-certified EMT deploys to Tajikistan.

The WHO classified, Type 1 EMT, provided by the Polish Centre for International Aid, deployed to Tajikistan (6 June–27 July) to provide additional capacity for infectious disease outbreak and intensive care units. Fourteen staff worked with COVID-19 treatment departments and intensive care units at priority health care facilities identified by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population.

8 June 2020

Further guidance and best practices are shared via networks such as the WHO European Healthy Cities Network.

To further enhance sharing of risk communications and community engagement guidance, best practices, and resources, WHO/Europe partnered with the [WHO European Healthy Cities Network](#) and health care worker networks in the Region.

12 June 2020

WHO/Europe links Global Shapers hubs and country and liaison offices.

WHO/Europe established links between the [Global Shapers Community](#) (an initiative of the World Economic Forum) and country and liaison offices, for enhanced country-level collaboration and volunteer RCCE support.

13 June 2020

GOARN deploys experts to Tajikistan.

Experts from GOARN, including partners from the Robert Koch Institute, a GOARN/WHO collaborating centre, the Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine, and Public Health England, deployed to Tajikistan as part of a two-week [scoping mission](#) for the deployment of [rapid response mobile laboratories](#) in rural areas of the country (13–20 June).

17 June 2020

WHO/Europe releases guidance on adapting primary health care services more effectively for responding to COVID-19.

Primary health care policy-makers received [guidance](#) on how to adapt primary health care services to more effectively address the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

18 June 2020

WHO deploys virtual mission to North Macedonia.

A virtual technical support mission deployed to North Macedonia in collaboration with the Ministry of Health of North Macedonia (18–29 June). WHO experts engaged with officials and technical staff, providing technical support and guidance on the next steps to take in all areas of the COVID-19 response.

19 June 2020

Essential health services continuity amid COVID-19 was further strengthened by a new coordination group under the IMST.

A new coordination group came together to provide comprehensive support to countries and areas regarding the continuity of essential health services during the pandemic. By the end of July 2020, nine countries and areas were implementing the four-step process to assess the impact of the pandemic on essential health services and undertake actions to restore any disrupted services.

WHO deploys mission to Armenia.

A rapid response mission deployed to Armenia (19 June–5 July) providing high-level technical support, including surveillance, hospital preparedness and readiness, and repurposing of health facilities for COVID-19, affirming the role of public health centres in the response. WHO also coordinated with international medical teams bilaterally deployed to support the country.

22 June 2020

WHO deploys mission to North Macedonia.

An expert mission deployed to North Macedonia (22–25 June), meeting senior health officials and religious leaders and visiting hospitals and long-term care facilities. The team supported the response to a resurgence of cases, provided advice regarding the risks associated with mass gatherings and measures that can be taken to manage those risks, and shared lessons learned from other countries' and areas' responses to COVID-19.

25 June 2020

WHO/Europe hosts webinar on protecting refugee and migrant health in the context of COVID-19.

WHO/Europe hosted a webinar to present and discuss the technical guidance on [strategies and interventions on preventing and responding to violence and injuries among refugees and migrants](#) in the COVID-19 context and through the lens of gender-based violence. The Ministry of Health of Turkey; the National Institute for Health, Migration and Poverty of Italy; the United Nations Population Fund; and the International Organization for Migration, along with experts from all three levels of WHO, delivered addresses and presentations on the topic.

26 June 2020

WHO-certified EMT deploys to Armenia.

A WHO-certified Italian Type 2 EMT deployed to Armenia through the WHO EMT initiative for an almost month-long COVID-19 support mission with 11 staff members (26 June–17 July). This level of

EMT can provide round-the-clock emergency care with deployable field hospitals and is equipped with an operating room for emergency surgical treatments and an intensive care unit.

29 June 2020

WHO mission deploys to North Macedonia.

A laboratory support mission deployed to North Macedonia (29 June–10 July) to support the country's assessment of its laboratory testing capacity for COVID-19.

30 June 2020

Millions of PPE items were distributed in Turkey to reinforce COVID-19 response efforts.

WHO [reinforced the COVID-19 response efforts in Turkey](#) by distributing millions of protective items such as masks, gloves, goggles and other items worth US\$ 1.7 million. Two WHO partners, the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants, and Doctors Worldwide, helped distribute the items throughout the country.

By the end of June (select figures):

WHO/Europe capacity-building training courses had continued to expand their reach:

For example, 11 248 health care workers had been reached by capacity-building webinars on clinical management and infection prevention and control by the end of June.

WHO/Europe had continued to deliver essential supplies to countries:

Additional procurement support for essential supplies in countries had been provided for Armenia, Georgia, Italy, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Tajikistan and Turkey.

WHO/Europe had continued to monitor and to support readiness in countries; for example:

- 100% of countries (53) had COVID-19 laboratory facilities;
- 74% of countries (39) had a COVID-19 RCCE plan according to transmission scenarios;
- 83% of countries (44) had a functional multisectoral, multipartner coordination mechanism for COVID-19 preparedness and response; and
- 60% of countries (32) had a COVID-19 national preparedness and response plan.

6 July 2020

WHO mission deploys to Turkmenistan.

A WHO [team of experts](#), with the participation of the Robert Koch Institute (a GOARN partner), deployed to Turkmenistan (6–16 July). The team worked with the health authorities on all aspects of COVID-19. The WHO experts visited public health centres, health care facilities, emergency centres, laboratories and other facilities to address areas such as infection prevention and control, laboratory services, patient management, surveillance and RCCE. A debrief of the mission is available [online](#).

By the end of June: The European Region reached 2.7 million confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus

8 July 2020

WHO/Europe convenes webinar sharing best practices for preventing infections in long-term care services.

A total of 53 participants from nine countries and areas participated in a webinar conducted by WHO/Europe regarding the strengthening of long-term care in the Region. Approaches, experiences and lessons learned were shared by countries from across the Region.

10 July 2020

WHO/Europe and the WHO Regional Office for the Americas convene countries and areas to share and learn about considerations and assessment methodologies for mass gatherings.

A total of 440 participants and speakers from across the WHO European Region and the WHO Region of the Americas were convened for a joint webinar regarding considerations behind holding cultural events during the pandemic.

WHO mission deploys to Kosovo.¹

A rapid support mission deployed to Kosovo¹ to support the WHO Office in Pristina and the Public Health Authority on strengthening the response to COVID-19, after a resurgence of cases.

Following the mission, WHO/Europe, with the WHO Office in Pristina, mediated a meeting between intensive care staff in the hospital of Sant'Orsola in Bologna and intensive care staff from the University Clinical Centre of Kosovo¹ in Pristina regarding mechanical ventilation case management.

13 July 2020

WHO-certified EMT deploys to Armenia.

A WHO-certified German Type 1 EMT from International Search and Rescue deployed for two weeks to support critical treatment needs for COVID-19. Within the team were emergency doctors, nurses, artificial respiration specialists, intensive care staff and experts in the manufacture of disinfectants.

22 July 2020

GOARN deploys experts to Tajikistan.

An additional eight experts from the Russian Federation were [deployed to Tajikistan](#) through GOARN to support the COVID-19 response and national capacity-building efforts in the areas of laboratory practices, virology and microbiology.

23 July 2020

Countries and areas receive guidance for conducting intra-action reviews.

WHO/Europe distributed [guidance](#) and tools to countries and areas for conducting COVID-19 intra-action reviews. This type of review promotes continuous learning and improvement of the outbreak response at the country level. Following the publication, the Regional Director communicated with Member States and areas in the Region to encourage the sharing of lessons learned throughout the Region.

¹ All references to Kosovo in this document should be understood to be in the context of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

WHO/Europe delivers large amounts of PPE to Turkey for refugee and migrant centres.

Refugee and migrant health in Turkey was addressed by WHO/Europe with the procurement and delivery of 1.8 tonnes of PPE to removal centres and the Directorate General of Migration Management logistics hub in Turkey. The shipments included 108 000 masks, 3000 goggles, 4500 coveralls and 250 thermometers.

27 July 2020

GOARN deploys mission to Tajikistan.

A GOARN partner deployment concerning laboratory support arrived in Tajikistan, staying until 13 September.

28 July 2020

The Regional Director outlines the action needed to ensure that HIV and other conditions are not neglected during the pandemic.

The Regional Director made a [statement](#) to the Virtual Symposium on the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic and HIV on SDG 3.3. He emphasized that the Region has an unprecedented opportunity to push for health system strengthening now that it is at the centre of the global, national, political and financial agendas.

By the end of July (select figures):

WHO/Europe capacity-building training courses and online courses had further expanded their reach:

For example, 11 361 health care workers were reached by 84 capacity-building webinars, and there were 90 303 enrolments in OpenWHO courses related to clinical and health interventions, with a completion rate of at least 80% of the course content.

WHO/Europe had continued to deliver essential supplies to countries and areas:

Overall, lab test kits and supplies had been provided to 32 countries and areas in the Region, and PPE had been sent to 17 countries and areas in the Region.

WHO/Europe had continued to monitor and to support readiness in countries; for example:

- 100% of countries (53) had COVID-19 laboratory facilities;
- 75% of countries (40) had a COVID-19 RCCE plan according to transmission scenarios;
- 85% of countries (45) had a functional multisectoral, multipartner coordination mechanism for COVID-19 preparedness and response; and
- 70% of countries (37) had a COVID-19 national preparedness and response plan.

By the end of July: The European Region had more than 3 million confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus