

**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN
Sixty-ninth session
Cairo, Egypt, 10–13 October 2022**

October 2022

INSTITUTIONALIZING PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

Objectives of the event

On 12 October 2022, a high-level side event will be held to discuss institutionalizing participatory governance in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

The objectives of the event are to:

- exchange experiences of participatory governance from Member States of the Region;
- identify suggested strategic priority actions to enhance participatory governance in the Region;
- discuss ways forward, including possible global action through a World Health Assembly resolution.

Background

Strong and effective health systems governance is essential for achieving robust universal health coverage in countries, as well as the accountability, responsiveness, preparedness and resilience of their health systems. This has been recognized in various national and international resolutions and declarations, including SDG targets 3.8¹ and 16.7² (September 2015), the [Political Declaration of the High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage](#)³ (September 2019) and the [Astana Declaration on Primary Health Care](#)⁴ (October 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed health systems weakness in countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region, and highlights the urgent need to build, secure and sustain mechanisms that can foster trust, transparency and accountability in health systems governance. WHO's regional health systems governance team followed an extensive regional and global consultative process based on generated evidence to identify strategic priorities for action which are key to achieving this. The suggested strategic priorities for action should enable WHO to work closer with countries on strengthening their health systems governance environments, and building back better, fairer and greener.

An important feature of the priorities for action is a commitment to strengthen participatory health system governance mechanisms, which are crucial to build, secure and sustain trust within the population.⁵ Establishing and institutionalizing such mechanisms during normal times is essential for them to be mobilized in the context of emergencies, especially since trust is not easily gained in the

¹ "Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all."

² "Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels."

³ Which committed Member States to "engage all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, private sector and academia, as appropriate, through the establishment of participatory and transparent multi-stakeholder platforms and partnerships, to provide input to the development, implementation and evaluation of health- and social-related policies and reviewing progress for the achievement of national objectives for universal health coverage, while giving due regard to addressing and managing conflicts of interest and undue influence".

⁴ In which Member States committed to "involve more stakeholders in the achievement of Health for All, leaving no one behind, while addressing and managing conflicts of interest, promoting transparency and implementing participatory governance."

⁵ Rajan D, Koch, K. The health democracy deficit and COVID-19. *Eurohealth*. 2020; 26(3):26-28

(<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/338949/Eurohealth-26-3-26-28-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>).

midst of a crisis. A wider process is underway to secure a World Health Assembly resolution on participation in health system governance in 2024, for which a background paper is being produced.⁶

This side event, with the support of the Government of Tunisia, seeks to share suggested priority actions from WHO's regional health systems governance team and mobilize political support for institutionalizing participatory governance in health decision-making in countries of the Region. It will also provide an opportunity for Member States to reflect on the participatory governance resolution and background paper which informs its development.

The momentum garnered during this meeting will underpin the planned discussion of Regional Committee agenda item 3(a) on building resilient health systems to advance universal health coverage and promote health security in the Region, as well as a possible World Health Assembly resolution in 2024, demonstrating support from Member States in the Region and building consensus around priorities to inform the global commitment.

Expected outcomes

- Member State focal points are informed about initiatives on participatory governance and the suggested strategic priorities for action.
- A regional consensus is developed regarding ways forward, potentially including actions at the regional and global levels.

⁶ This builds on the WHO publication Voice, agency, empowerment – handbook on social participation for universal health coverage, which was launched in May 2021: <https://www.who.int/publications-detail-redirect/9789240027794>.