



**Tallinn Charter 15th Anniversary High-level  
Conference**

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**“Trust and transformation: resilient and  
sustainable health systems for the future”**

**[30 June 2023]**

**Tallinn, Estonia**

**Original: English**

**12–13 December, 2023**

## **Scope and purpose**

The Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Estonia and the WHO Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe) will co-host a high-level health systems conference to commemorate 15 years of The Tallinn Charter: Health Systems for Health and Wealth. The conference, with the theme “trust and transformation: resilient and sustainable health systems for the future”, will take place on 12–13 December 2023 in Tallinn, Estonia.

### **Background**

There have been three WHO/Europe health systems conferences held in Tallinn. The first, a ministerial conference in 2008, delivered The Tallinn Charter. The second, held in 2013 to mark five years of the Charter, looked at health systems in the context of the all-of-government and whole-of-society approaches. The third conference in 2018, commemorating 10 years of the Charter under the banner of “leaving no one behind”, made the case for better investment in health systems and stronger health financing policies to deliver better and more equitable health for all in support of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In the four years since the 2018 conference, the geopolitical, demographic, socioeconomic and climate landscapes have changed immeasurably. While many of the health system challenges identified at the 2018 conference remain, health systems across the WHO European Region are now struggling to respond to a series of additional crises while maintaining essential health services. Some systems are moving away from, rather than towards, universal health coverage. The scale of these challenges necessitates changes to how our systems work and deliver care, as well as a reinforced call to commit to equitably funded health systems that serve everyone.

As perhaps the most significant shock across the Region, the COVID-19 pandemic has not simply unearthed weak points in our health systems, but exploited existing weak points and revealed just how fragile our systems are. Health system resilience and emergency preparedness can no longer be plans for the future; they must form part of stronger health systems now.

### **Trust and transformation**

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the current political, social and economic challenges in Europe, various studies and surveys have pointed to a growing lack of trust in institutions and politicians, with a consequent impact on health systems: individuals, not just

patients, do not trust that health services will deliver for them when they are needed; the health and care workforce are losing trust that the system values them; and politicians do not trust the ability of the health system to reform in the face of new challenges (for example, digital innovations) or to address growing issues of concern (for example, demographic ageing and rising comorbidities). The result is that public confidence in science and health leaders has been shaken, many health professionals are leaving their professions, and decision-makers are concerned about system performance and are unsure about where and how best to invest.

At the same time, and again precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been considerable innovations in health service delivery, with changes in primary health care models and digital solutions capturing much of the attention. Efforts have also been made to address specific issues through a health system lens, including strengthening health promotion and public health, especially around mental health; the challenges posed by climate change; and the health sector's role in promoting a societal "economy of well-being" approach. Scaling up and integrating such important directions in health systems thinking requires behaviour change, breaking with traditional structures and approaches, and overcoming dependencies on existing paths. Achieving that, however, will require a high degree of trust among all involved. Consequently, the topic of reinstating and strengthening trust within health service delivery and system transformation to future-proof our health systems will be the central theme of the 2023 Tallinn Conference.

### **Objectives and scope of the 2023 Tallinn Charter 15th Anniversary High-level Conference**

The Conference will take as its starting point the challenge facing health decision-makers across the Region of ensuring that the right people, with the right skills, are brought together in the right place, at the right time, to deliver care that is most appropriate and convenient for the patient. Such an objective will require examining and updating existing modes of service delivery and the factors that enable them as well as identifying specific actions to improve them. This is in line with the vision set out in the European Programme of Work, 2020–2025, endorsed by all 53 WHO European Member States, for a "profound transformation of health systems and social care in the Region, with the perspective of a digital, innovative, outcomes-directed and people-centred future".

Across two days, the Conference will first cover issues around trust in health systems, and then focus on the transformation agenda and how to deliver it.

On the first day, the conference plenary sessions will eschew the traditional approach of political and/or expert panels presenting to the audience. Instead, these sessions will be driven by specific questions and examples of both problems and transformations within health systems from the perspective of patients and health professionals. A series of videos showing case studies from different countries will provide the catalyst for discussions, with politicians responding to what they have seen and heard in those case studies rather than patients and health professionals reacting to a panel of speakers. The importance of trust and co-creation in policy design and implementation will be a common theme.

The focus of the second day will be on the tools and approaches needed to measure and manage transformation, including policy-relevant indicators and examples of where, what and how to invest to support sustainable change. Various parallel sessions will look at specific topics in detail. Across both days of the Conference, a number of high-level and inspirational speakers will address delegates.

The main aim of the Conference is to launch a vision for new and integrated health systems that recognize the key roles of patients and health workers and capture their voices and needs. The supporting objectives of the Conference are:

- to demonstrate why reinstating and strengthening trust in our health systems (among the public, health professionals and policy-makers) is a prerequisite to transformation;
- to understand the importance of co-creation in policy design in order to recognize the key roles of patients and health workers and to ensure that transformation initiatives capture their voices and needs;
- to present an updated health system performance assessment framework that will make reference to important new elements including digitalization and climate change, and taking onboard lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- to facilitate in-depth discussions on specific policy areas that are central to transformation, including: dual-track health systems; delivering in emergency contexts; digital initiatives; financial protection; engaging youth and civil society; sustainable greening of health systems; tackling workforce challenges; and precision medicine.

Conference sessions will focus on specific examples of good practice, presenting participants with, and enabling them to discuss, successful ways of transforming health systems to meet challenges such as demographic ageing, health workforce scarcity, and limited fiscal space for sustained investment and support for health systems in Europe.

## **Participants**

The Conference will be held in person and nominations from Member States are requested (please see accompanying letter). In addition to senior government representatives, participants will include invited or nominated representatives of non-State actors, international organizations, representatives of patient and health professional groups and select experts and academics.

## **Expected outcomes**

The Conference will have a number of expected outcomes designed to help Member State policy-makers to pursue the trust and transformation agenda and adapt it to their own contexts. These include:

- an updated WHO global health system performance assessment framework that will make reference to important new elements, including digitalization and climate change, and take on board lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic;
- a dashboard of policy-relevant indicators, developed jointly with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, that will help decision-makers to measure and track their own transformation policies;

- a series of policy briefs to accompany the plenary sessions, developed jointly with the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies;
- video case studies of successful transformation initiatives that explore the themes of trust and co-creation and their centrality to sustainable change; and
- a conference outcome statement on behalf of participants, which WHO/Europe will be able to take to the WHO Regional Committee for Europe at its 74th session in 2024 in order to establish a workstream under the European Programme of Work, 2020–2025.

Ultimately, the Tallinn Charter 15th Anniversary High-level Conference is expected to regitalize regional support for the values espoused in the Charter – solidarity, equity and participation – in order to strengthen and safeguard European health systems today and in the future.