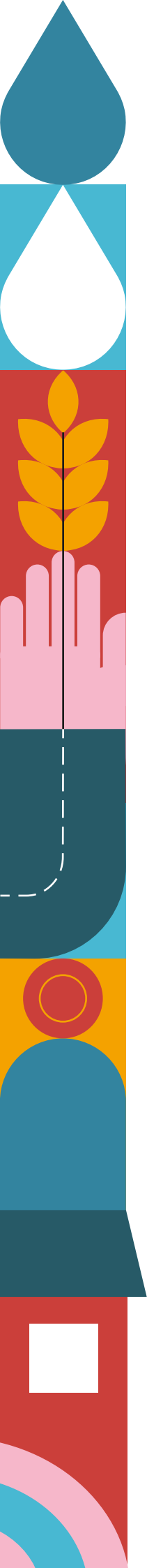


# Reimagining an economy for resilient and healthier societies that leave no one behind

Venice, Italy, 9 April 2024

*Scope and purpose*





# Scope and purpose

To mark its 20th anniversary as a centre of excellence in the WHO European Region, the WHO European Office for Investment for Health and Development (WHO Venice Office) is convening hosts, partners, country leaders, and renowned European and international champions and change-makers across the fields of economics, health and well-being and sustainable development to **reimagine an economy for healthier societies that leave no one behind for the coming decades.**

## Aim and Objective

The aim of the event is to demonstrate the common ground across sectors and between countries to design economies for healthier societies that leave no one behind.

The objective is to illustrate the key elements underpinning this reimagined economy by addressing the following crucial questions.

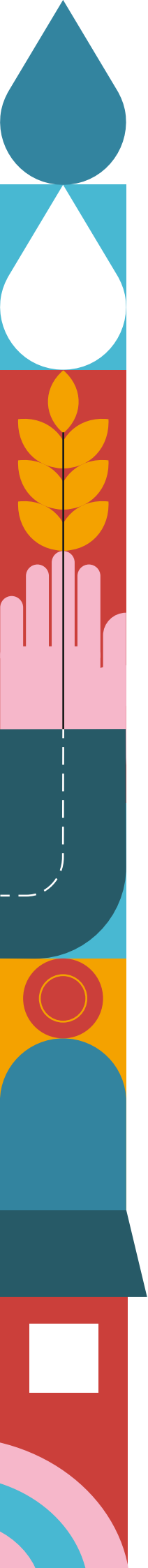
- How can new partnerships between the health, finance, and economy sectors address the big health and development challenges of today, including ageing societies, youth mental health, gender equality, resilient public systems, and urban–rural divides?
- How can governments leverage new investments, strategies and approaches to fund the transition to well-being economies, while maximizing the benefits for multiple sectors?
- How are public and private entities transforming their practices to build high-trust, cohesive and equitable societies and laying the foundations for fiscal stability, healthy populations, and a resilient economy?
- What can be learned from innovations in healthy cities and regions and how can this knowledge be harnessed to scale for national resilience and sustainable development?

The solutions discussed at this event will inform Member States, partners and the WHO in the practical implementation of commitments to accelerate health equity and sustainable development in the European Region. This includes the WHO Roadmap for Action on gender equality, human rights, and health equity, the Global Programme of Work and European Programme of Work, the United Nations Summit of the Future (Our Common Agenda), the Roadmap towards better health in small countries and regions, the findings of the WHO Council on the Economics of Health For All, and the European Union (EU) Council Conclusions on the Economy of Well-being.

## Background

Governments and communities alike are grappling with the challenges of ageing societies, rural–urban migration and growing social fractures, while aiming to harness the benefits of green and digital transitions in a way that uplifts all people and leaves no one behind.

While the 2030 Agenda has paved the way for an ambitious and transformative plan to guide global efforts towards ensuring that



all people reach their full potential in dignity, equality and a healthy environment, recent crises and trends in demographics, economics, health and a backslide on gender equality gains are threatening progress in improving healthy lives and livelihoods for all.

These issues have been debated at recent high-level events organized by the WHO Venice Office and its partners,<sup>1</sup> and there is growing consensus that these challenges cannot be addressed by any one sector country alone. A way forward is to reimagine how the economy can better deliver healthier, prosperous lives and societies that leave no one behind – and to do this within a context of squeezed fiscal space, stretched-out capacity, and social instability.

Transformative solutions must focus on addressing several essentials.

- **Forging new partnerships** is needed between sectors and stakeholders that have not traditionally collaborated extensively, such as health, economy and finance – for example, to rural-proof national investments and services, including by promoting resilient public services and vibrant economies and communities in rural areas.
- **Adopting innovations in investment, budgeting and spending approaches** is key to accelerating the transition to economies of well-being – for example, through gender budgeting and the use of social impact investments, bonds and tax incentives to create healthier living and working environments, with returns on investment for many sectors and diverse populations.
- **Expanding and enriching the pool of voices** in local and international decision-making is key to building high-trust societies and promoting social and economic resilience and cohesion – for example, supporting active community-based and nongovernmental organizations and social economy platforms, and using co-creation approaches such as community consultations and participatory budgeting.
- **Cross-fertilizing the successful innovations from cities and regions** is important to help develop local economies for resilient and healthier societies, leveraging this to scale in order to accelerate national progress. For example, the Caring Neighbourhoods initiative is paving the way for a national approach to effectively tackle social isolation and harnessing more assets for sustainable care in an ageing society.

## The role of the WHO Venice Office

The mandate of the WHO Venice Office is supporting countries with cutting edge metrics, evidence, policy options, and technical assistance to implement transformative social and economic policies that improve health and gender equality. Its work builds common ground between the health, economy, and development sectors to invest in public goods for healthy living, working, learning and livelihoods that leave no one behind, as well as showcasing how these are crucial for resilient and healthier societies.

<sup>1</sup> High-level forum in Copenhagen (March 2023), High-level meeting of the Small Countries Initiative in Luxembourg (May 2023), side event at the United Nations General Assembly (September 2023), Annual Dialogue on Tax and the Sustainable Development Goals (November 2023), European Healthy Cities Network meeting in Utrecht (November 2023).