

Establishing a next-generation country office

EPW core priorities and flagships

Protecting against health emergencies
Promoting health and well-being

WHO collaboration

Strategic planning
Partnership between the Regional
Office and Country Office

Cyprus and the Regional Office have collaborated closely for many years, notably through the Small Countries Initiative, a network of countries in the Region with fewer than 2 million inhabitants that aims to address their specific health needs and opportunities.

In 2022 the Cypriot Government sought to enhance collaboration with WHO, taking into account its experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. In turn, the Regional Office was looking to harness the country's expertise in cross-border partnerships and its unique geopolitical position to advance inter-regional health security. Following negotiations, Cyprus and the Regional Office signed an agreement to open the WHO Country Office in Larnaca in January 2023. It set out a vision for a next-generation country office for both national and cross-border initiatives. Health systems financing, emergency preparedness and crisis management, mental health, and AMR are focus areas for WHO technical assistance.

The impact

In 2023 a Region-wide consultation on migrant and refugee health in Larnaca informed the action plan endorsed at the 73rd session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe. Training to strengthen laboratory capacity for diphtheria and pertussis surveillance and reporting was also delivered to over 40 participants from three WHO regions. The Country Office now provides guidance on the health-related aspects of the Cyprus Maritime Corridor, a Cypriot initiative to bring humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. Similarly, WHO is coordinating health-related contingency planning to manage the humanitarian needs of populations displaced to Cyprus in the event of escalating conflict in the Middle East. In 2024, Cyprus also hosted the 10th High-level Meeting of the Small Countries Initiative.

Lessons learned

- A country office can support both national and cross-border health and health security needs when this dual role is mutually embraced.
- Strategic partnerships, diplomacy and pragmatism are vital elements to maintain WHO's relevance and impact in a country.

Donors and partners

Ministry of Health; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Health Insurance Organization; United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus; University of Nicosia; European University of Cyprus



European Region



Participants at the 10th High-level Meeting of the Small Countries Initiative.
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“I welcome the establishment of a WHO country office in Cyprus. The new office will not only help advance public health and health security but will also work collaboratively with the wider UN family in Cyprus to make much needed progress with global United Nations goals in support of peace and development.”

Mr Colin Stewart, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of Mission United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus

What's next?

Work on drafting a national mental health strategy and updating the national health emergency preparedness and response plan is ongoing. Inter-regional meetings on digital health for health security and on childhood cancer are planned.