



Bring your youth delegate to the WHO Regional Committee for Europe

Time to give youth a voice at the Regional Committee!

The WHO Regional Committee for Europe (RC) is WHO's highest decision-making body in the European Region. The annual session brings together ministers of health and high-level dignitaries to shape political commitment and action to improve health in the Region. However, to date, young people have not been well represented and are often not participating in or part of official global forum agendas. If young people are present, they are often only given observer roles or sidelined to side events that do not provide them with a say. We can change this!

How?

At the 74th session of the WHO Regional Committee (RC74) in Copenhagen, Denmark, on 29–31 October 2024, Member States are encouraged to include a youth representative in their delegation.

What is a youth delegate?

A youth delegate is a young person (below age 30) selected by a Member State to participate in the RC as one of their delegation representatives. The selection criteria and processes, mandates, roles and responsibilities of a youth delegate are determined by each Member State individually. This short guide provides examples of how this could be organized.

Why bring youth delegates to the RC?

The world currently has the largest generation of young people in history. Half of all people on our planet are aged 30 years or younger. In the WHO European Region, every third person is under 30, although in four central Asian countries within the Region – Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – over 50% of the population are under 30.

The lives of young people have been particularly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, in ways that may affect them for years to come. As the changemakers of today and tomorrow, it is crucial that they are represented in formal discussions and decisions that impact on their health and well-being, as well as the health and well-being of their families and friends. The policies made today will shape their daily lives and their futures.

Young people represent different backgrounds, concerns, sexualities, cultures, expectations and needs. They bring valuable perspectives to discussions on health and well-being; particularly those that concern them and their futures. Including young people at the table is critical to building equitable health systems and ensuring access to care for everyone. They are often less afraid to challenge the status quo and raise their voices.

Furthermore, the participation of young people is a guiding principle of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.¹ As recognized by the United Nations General Assembly, youth representatives make positive contributions to the United Nations bodies and play an important role to foster communication with young people.² The RC74 will be the opportunity to walk the talk at WHO's highest decision-making body in the Region.

Why would a Member State want to include a youth delegate as a part of its delegation?

- Give young people a voice and foster transparency, trust and accountability between young people and decision-makers at national and subnational levels. In hand with empowering young people, youth delegates can play a vital role in leading national level consultations with youth networks and organizations on RC agenda items and side events.
- Highlight its youth engagement efforts and increase awareness about the Member State's and WHO's work among young people.
- Shape the youth agenda at the WHO Regional Office for Europe and bring visibility to it at national and regional levels.

Why would a young person want to attend the RC?

- Shape regional health and well-being priorities.
- Gain first-hand experience and knowledge about global health and WHO, including how the RC works.
- Benefit from networking opportunities with peers and regional stakeholders at the RC.
- Contribute their own perspectives, ideas and priorities at the RC through preparing a focus topic, presenting a statement or intervention on behalf of the Member State, depending on the Member State's definition of the youth delegate's role.

Potential role and responsibilities of a youth delegate at the RC

The youth delegates are expected to take on an active role at the national and regional level to prepare for any preparatory meetings and sessions at the RC. This could take the form of:

- participation in preparatory meetings with relevant authorities and ministries in the run-up to RC;
- consultation at the national and subnational level with youth organizations and representatives on health and well-being issues of importance to young people, including via webinars or knowledge exchange discussions;
- preparation of a focus topic for the RC and a statement for the RC plenum, both in close coordination with the Ministry of Health;
- networking with youth organizations on RC topics;
- attending a briefing on RC topics with all youth delegates and the WHO Regional Office for Europe before the RC;
- participate in RC meetings, pre-events and bilateral meetings as a member of the national delegation;
- communication about the RC to young people, for example through social media channels and youth networks.

1 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. New York: United Nations; 1948 (<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>).

2 Resolution adopted by the General Assembly: 62/126. Policies and Programmes Involving Youth: "Youth in the Global Economy"- Promoting Youth Participation in Social and Economic Development. New York: United Nations; 2007 (https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/Publications/ad-v_a_res_62_126.pdf, accessed 27 June 2024).

Selection process and the national youth delegate programme

The selection process should be fair, transparent and accessible to enable a diverse group of youth representatives to apply, for example, young health professionals; young people living with a disability or chronic disease; young people who live in remote areas; those being marginalized or stigmatized because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or ethnicity; those experiencing homelessness, violence, abuse or exploitation; young refugees and migrants, and those without access to health or social services.

The selection process for a youth delegate could follow the steps set out below.

1. Define mandate, timeframe and funding of the youth delegate programme.
2. Launch an open call for applications for young people (age 18–30) to send a motivational letter and CV; promoted via social media channels, websites and youth networks.
3. First review and selection round: The review panel could involve the national youth council or a similar youth entity in place to ensure a peer review process for the selection.
4. Invitation of five candidates for interviews.
5. Final selection by review panel.

The youth delegate should be selected in good time, approximately six months before the RC. This is to ensure that the youth delegate can participate in RC briefings and has sufficient time to engage with national and subnational youth organizations. Some Member States in the Region already have existing programmes established to select youth delegates to attend the World Health Assembly and the RC.

Selection criteria

Member States could use the following criteria when selecting a youth delegate, The young person should be:

- aged 18–30 years of age;³
- studying, working or living in one of the 53 Member States in the WHO European Region;
- studying, working or with a background in health, well-being and/or youth issues and is committed to advancing health and well-being at regional, national and/or subnational levels;
- already engaged with youth processes at a national or subnational level;
- has knowledge of English and/or fluency in an official language of WHO European Region – French, German or Russian.

Member State support

The Member State should support the youth delegate before and during the RC, including but not limited to:

- ensuring the youth delegate is assigned to a focal point that is part of the delegation;
- holding briefings with the youth delegate and relevant authorities and ministries, and the Member State delegation in advance of the RC to build capacity and provide information and relevant background materials;
- ensuring that internal human resource, administrative and logistical systems are in place to support the youth delegate to carry out their responsibilities throughout the programme – this could include logistical questions, such as:
 - supporting the youth delegate logistically and financially to attend and be a part of the RC, organizing travel, accommodation, per diem and travel insurance (avoiding any advance out-of-pocket payments for the youth delegate);
 - providing a stipend, if applicable;
 - defining how to communicate with the youth delegate, if no internal email address can be provided.

³ There is no universally agreed international definition of the youth age group, with the definition varying from one Member State to another and the age to consider differs with time and socio-economic development. The WHO/Europe Youth4Health network will include young people between the ages of 10 and 30.

The Member State may also consider allowing and supporting the youth delegate in preparing and reading out statements on behalf of the delegations.

Funding

As the youth delegate is part of the official Member State delegation, the costs associated with establishing and maintaining a youth delegate programme and/or sending a youth delegate to the RC would be borne by the Member State. Member States are encouraged to pay a stipend for the youth delegate as compensation for their work.

Visas

The visa process differs by country. Member States should follow the normal procedure for applying for visas for youth delegates and cover the cost if necessary.

Contact the youth team at the WHO Regional Office for Europe

If you have any further queries or would like support in the youth delegate process, please contact the youth initiative team at WHO Regional Office for Europe at euroyouth@who.int

More resources

- 🔗 Youth4Health – the WHO Regional Office for Europe’s youth initiative.⁴
- 🔗 The WHO Regional Committee for Europe – an explainer.⁵
- 🔗 The United Nations Guide to Youth Delegates to the United Nations 2nd Edition.⁶

Youth4Health – the WHO Regional Office for Europe’s youth initiative

Kickstarted in 2021 Youth4Health is the special initiative of the WHO Regional Director for Europe, Dr Hans Henri P Kluge. It aims to amplify and embed youth voices and perspectives into all areas of the WHO Regional Office for Europe’s work. This includes providing young people with the opportunity to engage and participate in the Regional Office’s technical work, events, projects and governance structures.

In 2023, the WHO Regional Office for Europe launched the Youth4Health network, its first-ever youth network on health and well-being. The network aims to be a platform for meaningful engagement with young people to ensure youth participation in all areas of the regional office’s work.⁷



4 Youth4Health – the WHO Regional Office for Europe’s youth initiative. In: WHO Regional Office for Europe [website]. Copenhagen. WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2024 (<https://www.who.int/europe/initiatives/youth4health>, accessed 27 June 2024).

5 The WHO Regional Committee for Europe – an explainer. In: WHO Regional Office for Europe [website]. Copenhagen. WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2024 (<https://www.who.int/europe/about-us/governance/regional-committee/the-who-regional-committee-for-europe---an-explainer#:~:text=The%20WHO%20Regional%20Committee%20for%20Europe%20is%20WHO's%20highest%20decision,comprising%20all%2053%20Member%20States>, accessed 27 June 2024).

6 The United Nations Guide to Youth Delegates to the United Nations 2nd Edition. New York: United Nations; 2020 (<https://desapublications.un.org/publications/united-nations-guide-youth-delegate-programme-2nd-edition>, accessed 27 June 2024).

7 Youth4Health network. In: WHO Regional Office for Europe [website]. Copenhagen. WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2024 (<https://www.who.int/europe/groups/youth4health-network>, accessed 27 June 2024).