

TO: Ms Cristina Farrés, Editor-in-chief, Crónica Global
FROM: Liuba Negru, Press and Media Relations Office, WHO Regional Office for Europe
DATE: 17 June 2020

Dear Ms Farrés

The WHO Regional Office for Europe has taken note of the article “El Govern 'regó' con dinero público la oficina cerrada de la OMS en Cataluña” published by Crónica Global on 9 June 2020.

Your reporter contacted WHO’s headquarters in Geneva with questions about the WHO Barcelona Office by email at 14:07 on 9 June 2020. The article was published on your website less than half an hour later, at 14:36. As a result, WHO was not given a proper opportunity to respond to the reporter’s questions.

Much of the article’s information about WHO is inaccurate.

The headline states that the WHO Barcelona Office was closed during the pandemic. This is not correct. The Barcelona Office has remained operational throughout the pandemic. In line with local regulations and guidelines, all staff have worked remotely.

The text of the article implies that the WHO Barcelona Office carries out very few activities. This is not correct, as you will see from the enclosed report of its activities in 2018 and 2019.

The WHO Barcelona Office is one of the five specialized centres of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, which has its main office in Copenhagen. Collectively these offices support the 53 Member States making up the WHO European Region. The WHO Barcelona office is not a country office designated to support Spain only, but part of the Regional Office for Europe supporting all Member States.

In 2018-2019, the WHO Barcelona Office provided technical assistance and policy advice to 23 countries in Europe; coordinated technical assistance for major health system reforms in 7 countries; was involved in more than 150 technical assistance missions to countries; organized 4 training courses on health financing and health systems strengthening in Barcelona and 3 workshops outside Barcelona; contributed to 3 major WHO conferences and 12 other international conferences; published numerous WHO reports; and contributed to major reports published by the European Commission, the OECD and the World Bank.

During the pandemic, the WHO Barcelona Office has coordinated the health systems pillar of the overall WHO Europe response to COVID-19, providing technical guidance to Member States, contributing extensively to key publications, supporting the development of the [COVID-19 Health System Response Monitor](#) (a joint initiative of WHO Europe, the European Commission and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies) and facilitating two technical missions to Spain by a high-level WHO expert on COVID-19 in March and April 2019 in response to a request by the Government of Spain.

The financial contribution made to WHO by the Government of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia enables the WHO Regional Office for Europe to deliver its technical assistance to countries at a pace and intensity that would not otherwise be possible. This is highly appreciated by all Member States. In addition to financial support from Catalonia, Spain, the WHO Barcelona Office benefits from funding from the Governments of Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, Switzerland and the United Kingdom and from the European Union, the Gates Foundation and The Global Fund.

I trust that you will share this letter and the enclosed activity report and summary of key facts and figures with your readers to correct the inaccurate information about WHO contained in the Crónica Global article.

Yours sincerely,

Liuba Negru
Press and Media Relations Officer