

RESPONSE TO MEDIA ON ACTIVITIES AND FUNDING OF THE WHO BARCELONA OFFICE

- The World Health Organization (WHO) Barcelona Office is **part of the WHO Regional Office for Europe**, which has its Head Office in Copenhagen and supports **53 Member States**.
- The Barcelona Office is **one of five specialized centres** (located in Almaty, Barcelona, Bonn, Moscow and Venice) working in collaboration with technical divisions in Copenhagen.
- Its main area of technical work is on **health systems financing for universal health coverage (UHC)**. The Barcelona Office is responsible for monitoring financial protection from out-of-pocket payments for health care: an indicator of UHC of the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
- The Barcelona Office also leads technical work on **health systems strengthening** for improved **noncommunicable disease outcomes (NCDs)**. It contributes to work on **tuberculosis (TB)** prevention and care in the eastern part of the WHO European Region.
- It provides **technical assistance** to countries across the European Region (for example, through technical missions) and organizes **training courses** on health financing and health systems strengthening in Barcelona.
- The activities of the Barcelona Office are part of the regional programme of work **approved by the WHO Regional Committee for Europe**, which consists of representatives from all 53 Member States.
- A **detailed technical report** is submitted to the main donor of the Office, the Generalitat de Catalunya, Spain (attached). Activities are subject to regular reviews by the governing bodies of WHO. The most recent review took place in 2019 and is available ([here](#) and [here](#)) on the WHO website. **Specific webpages** are devoted to Barcelona Office activities on [health financing](#) and the [health systems response to NCDs](#).
- **Annual financial support** of approximately €1.66 million is provided by the Generalitat de Catalunya, **Spain**. Additional funding for activities has been provided by grants from the **European Commission**, the **Gates Foundation** and the **Global Fund** and the governments of **Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, Switzerland** and the **United Kingdom**.
- **Financial reports** are subject to internal and external auditing as part of the WHO programme budget implementation and approved by the Regional Committee for Europe and the World Health Assembly.
- The **Barcelona Office** consists of 10 WHO staff members and 2 full-time and 2 part-time consultants and a network of international consultants contracted on a needs basis.

WHO Barcelona Office for Health Systems Strengthening

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES FOR ACTIVITIES IN 2018 AND 2019

The Barcelona Office provided technical assistance and policy advice to 23 countries:

Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Slovenia, Spain, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

The Barcelona Office coordinated technical assistance for major health system reforms in 7 countries: Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. These countries benefit from the UHC Partnership programme financed mainly by the European Commission, with approximately \$4 million activity funds.

The Barcelona Office staff conducted 37 technical assistance missions to countries and supervised an additional 114 consultant missions in the 23 countries supported.

The Barcelona Office published:

- A [European regional report](#) on financial protection covering 24 countries. A [summary in Spanish](#) is available
- 12 [country reports](#) on financial protection
- A [book](#) on Health Systems Respond to NCDs: Time for Ambition
- A [compendium](#) of 22 Good Practice Briefs including 3 from Spain on risk stratification (country level), multidisciplinary primary health care (Catalonia) and prevention of diabetic retinopathy (Andalusia)
- Scientific articles in [Health Policy](#), the [WHO Bulletin](#) (2018), the [WHO Bulletin](#) (2019) and the [British Medical Journal](#)

The Barcelona Office organized:

- 2 training [courses on health financing for UHC](#) in Barcelona for a total of 125 participants from 28 countries
- 2 training [courses on health systems strengthening](#) for improved tuberculosis prevention and care in Barcelona for a total of 66 participants from 13 countries
- 3 sub-regional peer learning workshops on health accounts in Belarus, Hungary and the Republic of Moldova, supporting 12 countries
- A conference session entitled ‘Can people afford to pay for health care in Europe’ at the [European Health Forum Gastein](#) in October 2019, which received the [highest rating of all sessions](#) by participants

The Barcelona Office contributed extensively to major WHO conferences:

- [Health Systems for Prosperity and Solidarity – Leaving no one behind](#) in Tallinn, Estonia, June 2018, attended by 235 participants from 41 countries
- [Health Systems Respond to NCDs: experience from the European Region](#) in Sitges, Spain, April 2018, attended by 250 participants from 40 countries
- [High-level Conference on Health Equity](#) in Ljubljana, Slovenia, June 2019

The Barcelona Office delivered presentations at a further 12 international conferences.

The Barcelona Office contributed to the following publications:

- The [WHO Global report](#) on universal health coverage 2019
- The [WHO and World Bank global monitoring report](#) on financial protection 2019
- The [WHO Global report on health spending 2018](#) and [2019](#) editions
- The OECD report [Health at a Glance: Europe 2018](#)
- The OECD report [Health for everyone? Social inequalities in health and health systems](#) 2019
- The OECD report [Health at a glance 2019](#)
- The European Commission [State of health in the EU companion report 2019](#)
- The European Commission [State of health in the EU country profiles](#), 2019

The Barcelona Office supported the Catalan health system by:

- Conducting an evaluation of the evolution, results and impact of 30 years of health planning in Catalonia. Three technical missions took place in 2019, involving international experts and WHO staff in Barcelona and Copenhagen. The review offered 15 recommendations on how to improve the Catalan health plan.
- Contributing to the master's level training programme offered by ISGlobal of the University of Barcelona
- Presenting at a seminar organized by IESE Business School for senior managers in the Catalan health system
- Contributing to the conference “Una Agenda per a les Persones i la Prosperitat” on 2030 Agenda and SDGs, organised by the Generalitat at Sant Pau Art Nouveau Site
- Offering internships to students and graduates of universities in Barcelona

WORK RELATED TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN 2020

The Barcelona Office continued to be fully functional during the COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown, with all staff working remotely.

Some staff members have been repurposed to work on supporting health systems to respond to COVID-19. At the same time, the Office has continued to carry out the essential functions of its core technical competence.

The Barcelona Office produced technical guidance on [Strengthening the health financing response to COVID-19 in Europe](#), which sets out the key health financing policy actions countries can take to reduce the adverse effects of the pandemic as part of a broader health system response.

The Barcelona Office coordinated the health systems pillar of the overall WHO/Europe response to COVID-19, providing guidance to Member States on strengthening health systems and rapidly reorganizing service delivery to respond to COVID-19 while maintaining core essential services across the continuum of care. Outputs include technical guidance material, participation in several virtual, high-level meetings with government officials and support for press briefings by WHO Europe.

The Barcelona Office contributed to the following WHO technical guidance documents:

- [Strengthening and adjusting public health measures throughout the COVID-19 transition phases. Policy considerations for the WHO European Region](#)
- [Strengthening the health system response to COVID-19 – Recommendations for the WHO European Region: policy brief](#)
- [Strengthening the health system response to COVID-19 in the WHO transmission scenarios – Action points for the WHO European Region](#)
- [Maintaining the delivery of essential health care services freeing up resources for the COVID-19 response while mobilizing the health workforce for the COVID-19 response](#)
- [Creating surge capacity for acute and intensive care. Recommendations for the WHO European Region](#)
- [Supply of essential medicines and health technologies](#)
- [Strengthening the Health Systems Response to COVID-19-Community Pharmacy](#)
- [Preventing and managing the COVID-19 pandemic across long-term care services in the WHO European Region](#)

The Barcelona Office supported the development of the [COVID-19 Health System Response Monitor](#), which documents evidence on COVID-19 responses in Europe. It is a joint undertaking of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, the European Commission and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies. It collects and organizes up-to-date information on how countries are responding to the pandemic with a primary focus on health system responses but some monitoring of wider public health initiatives also.

The Barcelona Office facilitated 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 expert worked closely with the senior team of the Ministry of Health of Spain. During the missions, the expert visited multiple health care and nursing home facilities in Madrid and in three regions, including Catalonia.