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Ministry of Health of the Republic of Armenia



World Health
Organization

European Region

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EU and WHO Join Forces to Strengthen Armenia's Health Workforce and Mental Health Services

Yerevan, 26 February 2025 – The World Health Organization (WHO), with funding from the European Union (EU), is launching a new initiative in Armenia to strengthen the country's health workforce and mental health services. This initiative is part of a broader five-country project aimed at building resilient health systems in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) region. The initiative, officially launched today in Yerevan, marks a significant milestone in the EU-WHO collaboration towards a resilient and healthier Armenia.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed both strengths and vulnerabilities in health systems worldwide including highlighting the importance of a robust and well-supported healthcare workforce. In Armenia, as in many countries across the WHO European Region (Region), healthcare worker shortages, imbalanced distribution, and high levels of stress and burnout have put immense pressure on the health systems. Mental health, long neglected, has also emerged as a priority, with increasing recognition of the need for community-based, person-centered care that reduces stigma and expands access to services.

Quote by the Minister of Health

This initiative builds on the strong EU-WHO partnership in the Eastern Partnership region, with “health” as one of the priorities within the 2021-2027 multi-annual plan.

“The EU is committed to supporting Armenia's health sector, ensuring that today's investments lead to lasting and meaningful change,” said Mr. Vassilis Maragos, the Ambassador, Head of Delegation of the European Union to Armenia. “Through our partnership with WHO, we are strengthening Armenia's healthcare system by addressing critical workforce challenges and expanding access to mental health support. A resilient health system is the backbone of a strong society, and together, we are working to make quality healthcare a reality for all in Armenia.”

“With EU funding, WHO is supporting Armenia to strengthen their healthcare workforce and mental health services thereby paving the way towards resilient health systems to tide over health challenges and emergencies,” said Dr Siddhartha Datta, WHO Representative in Armenia. “Today's launch in Yerevan represents an important step in investing and supporting healthcare workers and ensuring mental health services are integrated and accessible to all.”

Addressing health workforce challenges

A well-trained and adequately distributed health workforce is critical to ensuring quality healthcare. This EU-funded initiative will focus on:

- Improving retention and attract healthcare professionals through better working conditions and mental health support.

- Enhancing the quality of medical and nursing education to align with the local healthcare needs.
- Supporting evidence-based workforce planning to ensure sustainable health system improvements.

Expanding mental health services and reducing stigma

Mental health remains a critical and often overlooked area of healthcare in Armenia. Stigma and institutionalized care models have historically limited access to quality mental health support. Through this initiative, WHO and the EU will work to:

- Strengthen national mental health governance and service provision.
- Train healthcare workers to adopt a rights-based, person-centered approach. Reduce stigma and discrimination through awareness campaigns, promote mental health and well-being including through arts and expand access to community-based mental healthcare services.

EU-WHO partnership for health

By focusing on resilience to health emergencies, the EU and WHO partnership ensures that countries like Armenia can better withstand future crises while advancing universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

With today's launch, Armenia takes a significant step toward a stronger, more sustainable healthcare system—one that supports its health workers and provides inclusive mental health services for all.

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About WHO

The World Health Organization (WHO) works globally to promote health, keep the world safe, and serve the vulnerable. In the WHO European Region, the organization supports governments in strengthening their health systems and responding to public health challenges.

About the European Union

The European Union (EU) is committed to supporting health initiatives worldwide, particularly in its Eastern Neighbourhood, through strategic partnerships and funding programs aimed at improving healthcare resilience and accessibility.