

JOINT STATEMENT OF ACTION

ROADMAP FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Special Event on the endorsement of the Roadmap for health and wellbeing in the Western Balkans, on the margins of the CEI Summit in Budva on 3 December 2021

Following the co-creation of the Roadmap for Health and wellbeing by the Western Balkans and the WHO, Regional Office for Europe, and recent discussions with the partners, we have agreed to strengthen our joint engagement for better health and wellbeing in the Western Balkans.

We realize that health systems in the Western Balkans were under pressure even before the COVID-19 hit, which places the Western Balkans increasingly at risk of rescinding the progress made before the COVID-19 pandemic.

We acknowledge the ambition of the Western Balkans to close the health gap with the European Union. That ambition has already led to notable progress in average life expectancy in the sub-region in recent years. However, the health gap is not closed yet.

Therefore, we jointly endorse the Roadmap for Health and Wellbeing in the Western Balkans to accelerate closing the subregion's health gap with the EU and attaining the Sustainable Development Goals.

We underscore our full support for the EU's enlargement process and the EU Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans to facilitate closer integration of the Western Balkans. We acknowledge that the Roadmap for Health and Wellbeing in Western Balkans further contributes to the integration of the Western Balkans by utilizing health to enhance stability and contribute to prosperity for the people of the subregion.

We stress our full support to ensuring health is an integrative part of the subregion's economic development and investment plans, increasing investments for health, and focusing on and investing into the Roadmap's health reform initiatives.

We commit to actively engage in the work of the Roadmap's Council and stay ready to facilitate the Roadmap's health reform initiatives in the Western Balkans.

We commit to working together to maintain a strategic orientation that reflects the desire of the 17 million people to have their health needs and expectations met, including the following: the guarantee of their right to universal access to quality care without fear of financial hardship, effective protection against health emergencies, and their ability to thrive in healthy communities, where public health actions and appropriate public policies secure a better life in an economy of wellbeing.