

Healthy Cities Network Political Statement – DRAFT

Local Level Policy Recommendations: Operationalizing a “One Health” Approach

We, the mayors, and senior political representatives of cities, gathered on 22-24 November 2022, confirm our commitment to the values and principles of the Healthy Cities movement.

The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us of the complexity of the public health challenges we are faced with today. Challenges that no one sector, group of stakeholders, city or country can address on their own – we cannot solve them in isolation. These challenges require a multisectoral approach and cooperation among multiple stakeholders - in other words, shared challenges require shared solutions and responses.

One Health is defined as an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems. The One Health approach requires mobilization of multiple sectors, disciplines, and communities at different levels of society to work together and to foster well-being in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals call for integration across sectors.

One Health is not a new concept, but it is necessary to be re-defined in the 21st century given the importance of the interdependence of human, animal and environmental health accompanied by escalating environmental changes.

The One Health approach is gaining renewed traction and high political attention in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and now features prominently in the priorities of the G7, G20, the European Union and in the work of multiple UN agencies. Within WHO, the recommendations of the Pan-European Commission on Health and Sustainable Development have heightened WHO European Region Member States’ commitment towards “operationalizing One Health” at the national, sub-national and at the local level. This is precisely because there is a recognition that a One Health approach can be cost-effective and highlights the benefits of health promotion, prevention and preparedness over cure. Well-being economies feed strongly into this approach with their aim to direct resources towards multisectoral approaches that deliver not only particularly on well-being, but also equity, inclusion and sustainability to ensure that no one is left behind.

While the COVID-19 pandemic remains a challenge with no end yet in sight, the pandemic has also reminded us of the importance of re-addressing previously known disparities regarding the distribution of health and health-determinants in populaces, and by doing so improving resilience and preparedness. The fact that the burden of disease in European societies largely is linked to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) notwithstanding, the COVID-19 pandemic has made societies acutely aware of the potentially detrimental effects that new infectious diseases can pose to societies. Monkeypox, another zoonotic disease, has recently been declared as a new global health emergency of international concern. In these challenging times people’s livelihoods and health, including mental health, has been widely and often disproportionately affected. It is imperative that we advance impact-driven interventions and seize the opportunity to invest in and scale up the One Health approaches at the local level building on the best available data,

evidence and practice each time. This will require promotion of bolder local policies and stronger governance and coordination across multiple sectors, systematic integrative surveillance systems and data sharing, more investment in research and in human capacity and physical infrastructure – to prevent future pandemics, prepare for effective responses to health and environmental emergencies as well as long-term challenges connected to public health across the Region.

We recognize the interconnection between the One Health approach and the Phase VII key themes -People, Place, Participation, Peace, Prosperity and Planet. We therefore build upon the Copenhagen Consensus of Mayors: Healthier and Happier Cities for All, and reaffirm our commitment to, and ensure that our policies are structured around the six key themes.

We commit to operationalize One Health at local level by pursuing a sustainable development agenda on food, environment, health systems, and health literacy by also acknowledging that solid partnerships and collaboration are necessary in achieving a sustainable and healthy future. We consider that the process of operationalizing One Health across the European region is an essential step in aligning our mandates to strengthen cooperation and coordination between cities, sectors and stakeholders at the local level.

It is widely recognized that cities not only play an essential role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, but cities are also critical change-makers as the global community scales-up efforts to operationalize One Health. The expertise of Healthy Cities in working across sectors is an added value, and strategically places them to be leading by example. Given that action takes place at the local level and local governments are closest to citizens, with the most immediate and visible impact on their lives we recognize that cities need to reinforce ongoing efforts and act now.

We, the mayors, and senior political representatives of cities, recognize that involving cities as actors, levels of government closest to communities, and agents that shape human habitats in operationalizing the One Health approach is critical to strengthen public health at the local level, improve resilience in populaces as well as our ability to prevent, prepare and respond to future crises. To operationalize One Health at the local level, we are putting forward the following recommendations:

Prevention

1. **Map, innovate and scale up existing One Health initiatives and networks at the local level:** Conduct consultations at the local level to map out initiatives that successfully combine the multidisciplinary and intersectoral aspects of a human-animal-environment approach within and beyond the health system. Recognize, foster, innovate and celebrate these initiatives.
2. **Increase One Health literacy across all levels:** Ensure a sound understanding and recognition of the One Health approach by developing and disseminating health and safety information across sectors. Develop capacity building initiatives to incorporate One Health approaches into training and education with a key focus on the human-

animal-environmental health interface. Foster twinning and exchange programmes to share good practices.

3. **Build back better by further investing in research and data across all sectors:** To effectively detect, respond to, and prevent disease outbreaks of foodborne and zoonotic origin and issues related to antimicrobial resistance, share epidemiological data and laboratory information across sectors at multiple levels of government. Together government officials, researchers, and actors across sectors at the local level should clarify roles and responsibilities to implement joint activities, as needed.

Preparation

4. **Strengthen the social component of One Health:** Build community engagement mechanisms to address the human-animal-environment interface in an integrated manner. Listen, utilize and act upon local voices to build trust and co-create community health and well-being.
5. **Create urban resilience:** Lead in the creation of urban resilience by collaborating across multiple city departments and working with private sector stakeholders and community leaders. It is crucial to invest and spend in ways that produce population and societal well-being for all and have infrastructure policies and strategies in place to protect and adapt cities against vulnerability, environmental stressors, and uncertainty due to weather extremes like heat waves, floods, cold weather, energy shortages and preparation to meet increased migration
6. **Ensure the Healthy Cities' Steering Committee reflects the One Health approach:** Strengthen the intersectoral steering committees by ensuring the relevant stakeholders and policy makers (health sector, environmental sector, veterinary and food safety sectors) are engaged. Recognize good practice and increase visibility of achieved targets and goals.

Promotion

7. **Promote change in food systems:** Promote and support the shift of food production and consumption towards a more sustainable and equitable pattern. Create and present solutions for producers and retailers to make healthier, more sustainable and local choices easier, increase awareness by providing information and introducing local food labeling.
8. **Promote healthy urban planning:** Include the One Health approach in urban planning. Enable citizens by making healthy behaviour the easy choice and contribute to equal opportunities. Invest in biodiversity by creating high quality green and blue spaces. Present best practices to city developers to create affordable housing and more sustainable and resilient cities.

9. **Promote projects and partnerships:** Celebrate achievements and milestones reached along the way of implementing the One Health approach. Increase visibility through communication mechanisms and share your achievements and challenges within networks to open discussions and gain feedback.

Transformation

10. **Transform collaboration across jurisdictions and on multiple governance levels:** Work with all sectors of local government to integrate the One Health approach through multiple levels of government including local, sub-national and national authorities.