



TERMS OF REFERENCE OF WHO EMRO Youth Council

I. Background & Status

Meaningful engagement with, and investment in young people requires deliberate effort to have in place essential capacities, systems, platforms and resources – to enable young people to have a seat at the table and contribute to driving transformative change at all levels on health and the Sustainable Development Goals¹ By including youth-led perspectives and innovation in shaping and implementing agendas related to health and broader sustainable development, we safeguard those are fit-for-purpose both today and in the future. Strategic partnerships with diverse organizations that engage with young people, such as the incoming members of WHO EMRO Youth Council, pave the way for increasingly comprehensive and participatory processes that benefit from systematic engagement by young people.

As young people are not a uniform group, it is equally important to have an intersectional lens that leaves no one behind, especially in a region as complex and diverse as the Eastern Mediterranean. Their experiences with socio-economic challenges, including those pertaining to education, physical and mental health, and wellbeing, possible heightened risk of violence² or stigmatization and marginalization due to gender, ethnicity, or geographical location vary widely.

WHO believes young people’s voices should be at the heart of decisions that impact the lives and health of people around the world. In 2023, WHO set up the WHO Youth Council as a dynamic network for stakeholders to amplify the agency and experiences of young people, and to harness and expand their expertise, energy, and ideas to promote public health. Aiming to advance comprehensive and inclusive youth engagement in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR), WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (WHO EMRO) is setting up a regional youth council to support scale up of formal youth engagement in public health in the region and beyond.

Harnessing the power of youth in the region aligns with our belief that meaningful engagement of people of all ages can help overcome countless challenges by forging connections and formulation of recommendations to inform and advance a truly inclusive and equitable EMR public health agenda. Accordingly, the EMRO Youth Council will serve as a participatory forum to bring forth youth voices and leadership in health.

¹ Engaging young people for health and sustainable development: strategic opportunities for the World Health Organization and partners. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2018. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

² Assaad, Ragui & Roudi-Fahimi, Farzaneh. (2010). Youth in the Middle East and North \Africa: Demographic Opportunity or Challenge?.

II. Vision and Goal

The goal of the WHO EMRO Youth Council is to raise the profile of youth contribution to public health at a regional, national, and local level and to support WHO in its efforts to strengthen youth contributions to public health systems through advocacy actions.

III. Mission

To support and provide recommendations on key health and development issues affecting young people through a comprehensive and inclusive WHO Youth Engagement Strategy.

IV. Core Principles

The WHO EMRO Youth Council is governed by the following principles:

- to be inclusive and diverse in membership and structure, ensuring adequate representation from different stakeholder groups, different contexts including emergency situation and income settings;
- to be transparent in all processes, including the operational strategy and activities;
- to ensure all activities align with WHO's norms and standards; and
- to facilitate coordination among interested parties to advance WHO's priorities on the contribution of youth to public health agenda.

V. Objectives

The WHO EMRO Youth Council will advise the regional office on:

1. in its efforts to advance technical matters relating to youth contribution and involvement in public health agenda;
2. on improving existing initiatives and development of innovative youth engagement initiatives related to public health;
3. provide recommendations and insight on implementing WHO resolutions, frameworks and road maps at global and regional levels
4. on possibilities to engage youth in WHO's governance processes, as and when appropriate;
5. by providing recommendations on the elaboration and implementation of a WHO Youth engagement plan of action in line with the global youth engagement agenda
6. by providing recommendations, as and when appropriate, on strengthening youth involvement in WHO EMRO's work; and to the steering committee of the WHO global youth council
7. increase communication between youth and other stakeholders by strengthening networking and knowledge sharing among different stakeholders including youth organizations.

VI. Governance and structure

The WHO EMRO Youth Council will be established as a chapter of the Youth Council, with its own governance and structure. It will be an advisory network of stakeholders and not a decision-making body.

The WHO EMRO Youth Council is not a separate legal entity and derives its legal status from WHO. Thus, it shall be administered and housed in WHO. The operations of the WHO Youth Council shall in all respects be administered in accordance with the WHO Constitution and General Programme of Work, WHO's Financial and Staff Regulations and Rules, WHO's manual provisions, and applicable WHO rules, policies, procedures and practices including the *WHO Framework of engagement with non-State actors (FENSA)*.³ The EMRO YC will comprise of a General Body of YC participants, Steering Committee and Working Groups.

6.1 General Body of YC Participants

The general body of the regional YC comprises up to 20-25 youth organizations with one representative to the general body. Participants will be selected following a vetting process of WHO EMRO's YC applications.

The selection is made through a transparent process, and will strive for balanced representation, with respect to gender, geographical area and organization type.

The role of the general body is to:

- develop and implement a YC workplan upon breaking into working groups under different themes in line with WHO mandate and priorities
- discuss issues put forward by the Steering Committee
- Make recommendations for consideration of the youth council and the WHO EMRO youth council

6.2 Steering Committee

The Steering Committee comprises up to 9 to 10 participants, who are appointed by WHO EMRO, based on a selection from the general body of participants. The selection of the steering committee members will also be made through a transparent process and will strive for balanced representation of the EMRO Youth Council participants, with respect to gender, age, geographical area and organization type.

Steering Committee recommendations will be made on the basis of consensus. In the event that a consensus is not reached, the Secretariat takes a decision in consultation with the Vice-Chair. With the exception of WHO, the duration of the term of appointment of the Steering Committee participants shall be for an initial term of two (2) years, with the possibility of renewal once. The Steering Committee is chaired by WHO EMRO, who may appoint one participant of the Steering Committee as the Vice-Chair for a two-year term.

Key responsibilities of the Steering Committee are as follows:

- Provide overall strategic direction for the work of the WHO EMRO Youth Council. This includes supporting development of the overall WHO Youth Council workplans and agenda.
- Jointly coordinate with the Secretariat the annual participants meeting of the WHO Youth Council,

³ *Framework of engagement with non-State actors* https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/wha69/a69_r10-en.pdf .

including development of relevant documentation and logistical support.

- Coordinate the establishment of working groups, approve their workplans and TORs, and oversee all working group activities.
- Monitor and evaluate activities and processes of the WHO EMRO Youth Council with a view to optimizing WHO EMRO Youth Council functioning and impact.

6.3 Working Groups

Working groups are established subject to Secretariat and Steering Committee approval. The area of focus of the working groups will be decided jointly by the Secretariat and Steering Committee. The terms of reference for each working group are approved by the Secretariat and are of a two (2) years tenure, with the possibility of extension.

All participants of the WHO EMRO Youth Council participate in working groups. The purpose of the working groups is to bring together participants with similar interests, to share information and collectively work on specific activities that align with the WHO EMRO Youth Council's overall mission and objectives. Each working group will have an area of focus with a corresponding workplan, that is approved by the Steering Committee, which outlines its objectives, key outputs, priorities and methodology.

A Chair and co-Chair will be appointed in each working group by the Secretariat. They are responsible for:

- coordinating working group meetings and activities;
- facilitating communication within the group, ensuring balanced participation of its group participants; and
- providing verbal and written reports of working group progress to the Secretariat and the Steering Committee.

The Chair and co-Chair of each working group will report on their progress at the annual participants meeting, and through an annual report to the Steering Committee.

VII. The Secretariat

Subject to the availability of sufficient human and financial resources for this purpose, secretariat support and coordination for the WHO Youth Council will be provided by WHO EMRO/HQ. Secretariat support will be provided in accordance with WHO's rules, regulations, policies and procedures. The role of the Secretariat is to oversee the day-to-day management of the WHO Youth Council's work, including coordination of discussions across stakeholders on priorities and gaps, preparation of draft work plans for discussion by the Steering Committee and/or the Working Groups along with administration and budget management.

More specifically, key responsibilities of the Secretariat are as follows:

- Serve as the interface between the WHO Youth Council and its participants.
- Select and manage the WHO Youth Council's membership in line with WHO rules and policies.
- Appoint the WHO Youth Council Vice-Chair and define the Terms of Reference for the role.
- Coordinate the development, implementation and maintenance of the WHO EMRO Youth Council work plans in consultation with the Steering Committee.
- Oversee implementation of the WHO Youth Council workplans, in collaboration with the Steering Committee.
- Chair the Annual and Steering Committee meetings.
- Monitor and evaluate activities and processes of the WHO Youth Council, making amendments as necessary, in consultation with the Steering Committee, to optimize overall WHO Youth Council functioning and impact.
- Coordinate correspondence with the WHO EMRO Youth Council participants, as required, to facilitate participation and collaboration of all participants.
- Coordinate the Annual Participants meeting of the WHO Youth Council, in collaboration with the Steering Committee, including development of relevant documentation (e.g., agenda), logistical support and meeting modalities.
- Develop a central repository for the WHO EMRO Youth Council to house all relevant documents and resources.
- Develop and regularly update the WHO Youth Council webpage (hosted by WHO EMRO).

The Secretariat reserves the right not to implement any WHO EMRO Youth Council recommendation or activity which it determines gives rise to undue financial, legal or reputational liability or is contrary to WHO policies, regulations and procedures.

VIII. Membership

The WHO EMRO Youth Council membership⁴ will be drawn from organizations representing the following categories:

- intergovernmental organizations
- nongovernmental organizations (including patient advocacy organizations)
- academic institutions
- philanthropic foundations
- youth parliamentarians.

Members of the regional WHO EMRO Youth Council must meet the following criteria:

- The aims and purposes of the entity should be consistent with the WHO Constitution and conform with WHO's policies.
- The entity should contribute significantly to the advancement of public health and to the objectives, vision and goal of the WHO EMRO Youth Council and demonstrate documented support for the WHO work and activities on youth.
- The entity should respect the intergovernmental nature of WHO and the decision-making authority of Member States as set out in the WHO Constitution.
- The entity should be actively, internationally and regional working in the field of youth and public health with proven experience and expertise in the subject matter for at least 3 years.
- The entity should have an established structure, constitutive act, and accountability mechanism.
- The entity, if a membership organization, should have the authority to speak for its participants and have a representative structure.
- If a non-State actor is applying, the entity is required to provide the following information and documents: name, objectives and mission of the entity, copy of the legal status (such as bylaws, constitution), governance structure, names and affiliations of the participants of main decision-making bodies (such as Board, Executive Board), the assets, annual income and funding sources (list of donors and sponsors), main relevant affiliations and website address. The entity will also sign the tobacco-arms disclosure statement without alteration.

⁴Individuals acting in a personal capacity are not eligible for the WHO Youth Council membership.

Each participant of the EMRO Youth Council must:

- adhere to the Terms of Reference of the EMRO Youth Council;
- actively participate in and support the WHO Youth Council, its purpose, goals, objectives, guiding principles, work and activities;
- attend and actively participate at the WHO EMRO Youth Council's various annual and ad hoc meetings;
- take responsibility according to the division of labour, and make meaningful contributions, in connection with the work and activities of the various WHO EMRO Youth Council working groups;
- share knowledge and information with other participants (such as resources, data, case studies, experience etc.);
- act in the best interest of public health in alignment with WHO policies; and
- ensure effective communication with Secretariat and with the Steering Committee related to activities relevant to the WHO EMRO Youth Council's mission and vision.

Participants shall not make public statements about WHO EMRO Youth Council activities or on behalf of the Secretariat without the prior written consent of the Secretariat acting in consultation with Steering Committee.

8.1.Membership applications

Applications will be invited from interested parties using an online application process and standardized form developed by the Secretariat. Membership approval will be based on an assessment, due diligence process and review of submitted documents, in accordance with the eligibility criteria part of the current terms of reference and in accordance with WHO's rules and policies. Membership applications will be reviewed and approved by the Secretariat. Following this, membership applicants will be notified of their membership approval (or otherwise) by the Secretariat. Members will be selected for a term of two years, with the possibility of renewal once.

8.2.Observers

The Secretariat may invite representatives from organizations that have specific subject matter expertise relating to the work of the WHO EMRO Youth Council to Annual Participant or Steering Committee meetings as observers, subject to the outcomes of an assessment, due diligence process, and review performed on the observers. Observers shall only take the floor at the invitation of the Chair.

In the interim, members of the regional steering committee can be invited as observers to the meetings of the WHO Youth Council and shall take the floor at the invitation of the chair.

IX. Meetings

Annual Participants Meeting

As the Secretariat of the EMRO Youth Council, WHO convenes an annual participants meeting, however additional meetings may be scheduled as necessary. The annual participants meeting is open to all EMRO Youth Council participants. Each participant will be able to nominate a maximum of 2 delegates to attend.

The aim of the annual participants meeting will be to:

- review the EMRO Youth Council work plan
- serve as a platform and network for knowledge sharing amongst participants
- discuss issues put forward by the Steering Committee.

Steering Committee meetings

The Steering Committee will meet every three (3) months, to report on the progress of the working groups, discuss issues and revise the WHO EMRO Youth Council workplan.

Steering Committee participants are accountable for informing their respective organizations on the recommendations, commitments and plans of the WHO EMRO Youth Council.

Working group meetings

Each working group will have meetings attended by working group participants. The frequency of working group meetings will be determined by the Chair and co-Chair of the respective working group.

X. Termination and withdrawal

Each participant has the right to withdraw from participation in the WHO EMRO Youth Council, at any time, subject to providing one month written notice to the Secretariat and to the orderly conclusion of any ongoing activities.

If a participant does not attend two consecutive Annual, Steering Committee or Working Group meeting, without explanation to the Secretariat, the Secretariat may conclude that the participant has withdrawn from the WHO EMRO Youth Council.

The Secretariat also has the right to terminate the membership of any participant at any time, upon providing written notice thereof to such participant. Without limiting the foregoing, the participation of any entity in the WHO EMRO Youth Council shall terminate if and when such participant: (a) no longer subscribes or adheres to the goals, objectives and/or guiding principles of the WHO EMRO Youth Council, as described in these Terms of Reference; (b) engages in activities that are not compatible with WHO Policies, and/or (c) ceases to meet the membership criteria for the WHO EMRO Youth Council, as set forth in these Terms of Reference. In such instances, the decision to terminate involvement of a participant will be made by the Secretariat, in consultation with the Steering Committee.

WHO reserves the right to withdraw from administration of the WHO EMRO Youth Council at any time, subject to providing the WHO EMRO Youth Council participants with at least six (6) months' prior written notice and to the orderly conclusion of any ongoing activities. WHO also has the right, exercisable in its sole discretion, to close the WHO EMRO Youth Council, to terminate any membership, its Steering Committee and/or to terminate any Vice-Chairmanship, in each case, at any time upon providing written notice thereof to the participant(s) concerned.

XI. The WHO EMRO Youth Council evaluation

The Secretariat, in consultation with the Steering Committee, will evaluate the overall processes and outcomes of the WHO EMRO Youth Council on a biennial basis, with the aim of assessing whether WHO should continue to host the WHO EMRO Youth Council.

XII. Communications

12.1. Visual Identity

To ensure that the WHO Youth Council is deliberately communicating with one voice to external parties on topics of substance (principles, priorities, target product profiles, standards, plans and actions, funding, and all confidential information, etc.) any communication in the name of the WHO EMRO Youth Council will take place through the Secretariat.

The WHO Youth Council may develop a visual identifier such as a logo which will help identify the network to its audience. The visual identifier will be accompanied by the statement “WHO EMRO hosted Network”. The right to use the logo, including on publications, may be granted to participants on a case-by-case basis with prior written approval of the Secretariat. Participants shall not use WHO’s name, acronym and emblem. This includes, inter alia, the display of the WHO/ WHO EMRO logo and name on any premises, equipment, as well as on any communication and/or training materials, training certificates, social media tools or publications.

12.2. Publications

The EMRO Youth Council shall not produce publications, unless exceptional approval is given by the Secretariat. Any publication by a participant, other than WHO, referring to WHO EMRO Youth Council activities shall contain appropriate disclaimers as decided by WHO, including that the content does not reflect the views or stated policy of the participants.

The participants must ensure that the work of the WHO EMRO Youth Council is not misrepresented, and appropriate disclaimers are included where necessary. The WHO EMRO Youth Council activities shall not include the development of technical materials, normative documents or policy papers.

12.3. The WHO Youth Council website

The WHO EMRO Youth Council has a webpage that is housed within WHO EMRO’s domain. The webpage includes a list of participants’ entities, subject to their consent.

XIII. Finance

Participants will be responsible for their own expenses in relation to all WHO EMRO Youth Council activities (including participation at meetings), unless agreed otherwise by the Secretariat. If participants receive third party funding to support participation in WHO EMRO Youth Council meetings and activities, this must be disclosed to the Secretariat.

The Secretariat support and related day to day operations of the WHO EMRO Youth Council will be financed by voluntary contributions from the participants. The Secretariat may also raise funds from other sources to support the work of the WHO EMRO Youth Council, in accordance WHO rules and procedures, as appropriate. All Secretariat funds shall be received, administered and acknowledged in accordance with WHO's policies including its financial regulations, rules and practices. However, grant applications made by the participants for raising funds in the name of the WHO EMRO Youth Council require prior consultation with and endorsement by the Secretariat to ensure alignment with the goals and principles of the network. The Secretariat reserves the right to require that the WHO EMRO Youth Council name not be used in such grant applications. Contributions by participants including donations (in cash or in kind), will be acknowledged by the Secretariat in accordance with WHO's applicable rules, policies and practices.

XIV Confidentiality

Depending on the agenda item being discussed, each participant in the WHO EMRO Youth Council may be required to abide by confidentiality obligation and sign a standard confidentiality undertaking using the form provided by WHO for this purpose.

XV Amendments

These Terms of Reference may be amended from time to time by WHO EMRO in consultation with the Steering Committee

