



World Health  
Organization

European Region

# Annual Report 2024

## WHO Country Office in the Czech Republic



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## Abbreviations

ACDZ	Alliance of Mental Health Centres (“Aliance Center Duševního zdraví”)
ARI	Acute Respiratory Infection
CBRN	Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear
CCS	Country Cooperation Strategy
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HCV	Hepatitis C Virus
HCWF	Health and Care Workforce
HBV	Hepatitis B Virus
HIS	Health Information System
HR	Human Resources
IHS	Institute of Health Informatics and Statistics of the Czech Republic (ÚZIS - Ústav zdravotnických informací a statistiky ČR)
ILI	Influenza-Like Illness
IPVZ	Institute for Postgraduate Medical Education (“Institut postgraduálního vzdělávání ve zdravotnictví”)
MoH	Ministry of Health
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MDR-TB	Multi-Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis
NCDs	Noncommunicable Diseases
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIMH	National Institute of Mental Health
NIPH	National Institute of Public Health (SZÚ - Státní zdravotní ústav)
NMP	Novel Medicines Platform
PHC	Primary Health Care
PSEAH	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
ToT	Training of Trainers



## Foreword



It is with immense pride that I present the Annual Report 2024 of the WHO Country Office in the Czech Republic, showcasing our activities and the impact we have achieved throughout the year.

A key milestone of 2024 was the development of the Country Cooperation Strategy 2024-2030, a collaborative effort with the Ministry of Health and other key health stakeholders. This strategic framework has been guiding the future of the health system and public health in the Czech Republic, setting a clear vision for the years ahead aligned with the National Health Plans.

In 2024, we focused on several critical areas: strengthening universal health coverage by supporting health systems, public health and primary healthcare, enhancing pharmaceutical policies, strengthening emergency preparedness and response, preventing and controlling diseases, incorporating technology in health, as well as promoting health equity and well-being.

This year, the Czech Republic experienced the continued impact of the Ukraine refugee crisis and natural disasters with the floods in September, amidst a rapidly evolving global geopolitical context. Despite these complexities, the WHO Country Office in the Czech Republic has remained steadfast in promoting health, ensuring safety and advocating for the well-being of the people of Czechia. Under the WHO theme for 2024, “My health, my right”, we reaffirmed our commitment to championing the rights for health, for all. We put extra effort into addressing the impact of rapidly spreading misinformation and building back trust in science.

Our achievements would not have been possible without the invaluable support and collaboration of our partners. The WHO Country Office in the Czech Republic extends our deepest gratitude to the Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic and other national health agencies, the wider Government of the Czech Republic, our donors and the international community, agencies in the United Nations family in Czechia, civil society partners, health professionals and the people of this nation for their trust and collaboration.

Together we will continue our efforts towards a healthier, more resilient future.

Dr Zsófia Pusztai  
WHO Representative in the Czech Republic

## Executive Summary

In 2024, WHO with key partners in the Czech Republic achieved remarkable progress in strengthening public health and addressing the needs of both the local population and Ukrainian refugees. Through a dynamic mix of initiatives, partnerships and innovations, the WHO in close partnership with the Ministry of Health (MoH) tackled pressing healthcare challenges while laying the groundwork for sustainable improvements.

Aligned with ongoing reforms in Czechia’s healthcare system, WHO through our Primary Health Care (PHC) Demonstrated Platform facilitated the sharing of best practices and PHC innovations with countries such as Spain, Austria and Estonia. WHO with Czech health policy leaders, initiated a review on multidisciplinary PHC centres to shape future policy and WHO stayed steadfast in supporting public health reform steps as well as Czech leadership in Novel Medicines Platform.

Healthcare workforce integration took centre stage, with WHO collaborating to support foreign professionals, including Ukrainian refugees. This included consultations, training sessions for 200 participants and a multilingual website that reached over 14,000 visitors. Strategic discussions began for a comprehensive national healthcare workforce strategy to address future needs.

WHO’s vaccination campaigns reached over 400,000 individuals, enhanced by improvements to the Central Vaccination Registry. Meanwhile, targeted efforts in mental health and psychosocial support benefitted 1,880 refugees, trained educators and healthcare workers and raised awareness among 625,000 individuals.

Focused gender-based violence interventions empowered women, while infectious disease projects tested over 20,000 individuals and enhanced tuberculosis diagnostics. Emergency preparedness was boosted with capacity mapping and collaboration on chemical, biological and radiological readiness.

From supporting healthier lifestyles and primary prevention, through campaigns reaching millions, to reimagining public health education with Czech universities, WHO Czech Republic fostered innovation, resilience and inclusivity in 2024—building a healthier future for all.

# WHO Czech Republic Annual Report 2024

## People reached in 2024



3520 of people supported in accessing healthcare



5470 people received mental health support



328 154 people reached with information on Czech health system



Over 600 000 people reached with information campaign on mental health



834,481 people reached with information social media campaign on the importance of vaccination, with an additional 427,732 unique users reached through YouTube



2067 people trained by WHO and partners



## Budget allocated in 2024

**4,308,052 USD**

Activities



**2,032,289 USD**

Donations of equipment and supplies

## Procurements



- 70 hospital beds
- 1 X-Ray machine
- 1 genetic sequencer Miseq
- 1 steam sterilizer
- 347 infrared thermometers
- 143 pulse oximeter – portable handheld
- 18 pulse oximeter – tabletop
- 121 patient monitor – multiparametric (2 types)
- 23 patient ventilators – intensive care
- 10 patient ventilators – mobile
- 49 BiPAP with tubing and patient interface for adults and children
- 25 High Flow Nasal Cannula with tubing and patient interface for adults and children
- 110,000 aprons protections
- 3,000 face shields
- 485,000 gloves for examination and surgical
- 21,000 gowns
- 50,000 masks – medical/surgical

## Roundtables organized



- 2 Roundtables on Strengthening Science Ecosystems in the Czech Republic
- 2 Public Health Education Roundtables

## Trainings



- 1 The Doing What Matters in Times of Stress and the fundamentals of training non-mental health professionals in scalable psychological interventions trainings for trainers
- 1 The Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Minimum Service Package (MHPSS MSP) Capacity Building Workshop
- 1 Population Health Surveillance training

## Publications



Joint review of the health information system in the Czech Republic

## Working group meetings organized



- 2 Working group on Strengthening Public Health Education in the Czech Republic

# Situational Overview

The Czech Republic has made significant progress in health outcomes over the past two decades but faces ongoing challenges. An ageing population and a rise in long-term health conditions are increasing pressure on the healthcare system. In 2019, half of all deaths were linked to preventable risks such as unhealthy diets (23% vs 17% as an EU average), tobacco use (20% vs 17%), and alcohol consumption (6% on par with the EU average). The recent Ukrainian refugee crisis has further strained the health system, underscoring the need for sustainable and adaptive health strategies.

## Health in key figures:

- Average life expectancy: Male 77.0 years, Female 82.9 years
- Potential years of life lost: 5,800 per 100,000 persons
- Neonatal mortality rate: 1.2 deaths per 1,000 live births
- Preventable mortality: 233 deaths per 100,000 persons
- Treatable mortality: 102 deaths per 100,000 persons
- Percentage of those perceiving their health status as good/very good: 66.4%

The national strategy is outlined in the Strategic Framework for Healthcare Development in the Czech Republic until 2030, last updated in 2020, and the National Recovery Plan for 2022–2026, which summarises reforms and investments approved by the European Commission. Revisions of the former are currently underway to better align with recent developments and extend the coverage through 2035.

In 2024, under the Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP), efforts continued to support one of the largest Ukrainian refugee populations in the EU hosted by the Czech Republic. Key areas of focus included housing, education, employment and healthcare to promote integration and social cohesion.

Despite notable achievements such as high school enrolment of Ukrainian refugees reaching 91% and workforce participation at 79%, challenges persist. These include limited access to affordable housing, informal employment, language barriers and healthcare gaps. Barriers to healthcare access, particularly for general practitioners and paediatricians, as well as pronounced mental health needs, remain critical issues to address.

Ongoing efforts emphasize targeted support for vulnerable groups and programmes to prevent exploitation, improve social inclusion and strengthen healthcare and mental health services.

# Country Cooperation Strategy

## The First Country Cooperation Strategy (CCS) for the Czech Republic

In 2024, Prof MUDr. Vlastimil Válek, Minister of Health of the Czech Republic, Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe and Dr Zsafia Pusztai, WHO Representative in Czechia signed the Country Cooperation Strategy 2024–2030.

This milestone marks a significant chapter in the history of WHO's presence in the Czech Republic, reflecting a strong commitment from both organizations to work collaboratively in advancing the health and well-being of the Czech population in the long term.

The CCS provides a comprehensive roadmap, aligned with the Czech Republic's national health and development agenda, detailing the strategic vision, priorities and objectives for the WHO Country Office in the Czech Republic's partnership with the country in health policies.

## Country Cooperation Strategy 2024-2030 strategic priorities:

- **Strategic goal 1:** Increased coverage of essential health services for all in the Czech Republic
- **Strategic goal 2:** Strengthened preparedness, prevention, detection and response to health and related emergencies in the Czech Republic
- **Strategic goal 3:** Improved well-being for all, at all ages, in the Czech Republic through healthier home, learning, working and living environments
- **Strategic goal 4:** Strengthening the country capacity for health intelligence and innovation





# WHO Czech Republic operations – 2024 in review

## Boosting mental health services for refugees

### Boosting mental health services for refugees

- **Over 7,000 interventions for Ukrainian refugees facilitated in seven Czech regions**
- **More than 215,000 refugees benefited through WHO and partner-supported services, including health literacy campaigns**

In addition to the interventions and information campaigns, collaboration with the Alliance of Mental Health Centres (ACDZ) has fostered social cohesion by supporting children and adolescents in schools, including regular visits by psychologists. The inclusion of Ukrainian mental health professionals not only ensures culturally and linguistically appropriate care but also builds confidence among refugees accessing the Czech healthcare system.



*“With WHO support, we strengthened regional mental health centre teams to provide tailored services for Ukrainian refugees.”*  
Ms Hana Bolinová, Project Manager for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Projects, ACDZ, Czech Republic.



## Primary Health Care (PHC)

- **14 Czech health representatives attended a study visit in Spain**

In May, WHO organized through its Primary Health Care (PHC) Demonstration Platform a study visit to Spain for 14 Czech health representatives, including officials from the MoH, health insurance companies, general practitioners and public health professionals. The visit focused on exploring primary healthcare innovations, such as multidisciplinary teams, advanced nurse competencies, digitalization tools for improved PHC quality care, chronic patient care, mental health integration and community-oriented practices. Participants had the opportunity to engage with professionals and exchange experiences to inspire and guide ongoing reforms in the Czech PHC system. This was followed by a webinar series with Austria and Estonia as they share similar challenges with the Czech PHC system, and their experience can further facilitate the planned changes.

- **A systematic review of best practices carried out in multidisciplinary primary care centres and expanding non-medical staff competencies in Europe**

WHO has remained steadfast in its support of the MoH for ongoing policy discussions and reform initiatives. A systematic review on the use of multidisciplinary primary care centres and the expansion of non-medical staff competencies in a selection of European countries was conducted. The findings of this review were presented at the PHC Reform Working Group at the MoH and are expected to spur progress towards revising primary healthcare in Czechia.

## Health Workforce

- **1 high-profile conference attended by 47 human resources and education professionals**
- **49 individual consultations provided to foreign healthcare workers**
- **200 participants reached through webinars and trainings**
- **1 multilingual, resource-rich website developed with a total of 14,000 visits**

In 2024, WHO Country Office in the Czech Republic collaborated with the Institute for Postgraduate Medical Education (IPVZ) to strengthen healthcare workforce integration, focusing on equipping foreign healthcare professionals, including Ukrainian refugees,

to navigate the Czech healthcare system. This effort included organizing a high-profile conference for human resources and education professionals, numerous consultations for foreign healthcare workers and a series of webinars and training sessions. Additionally, a multilingual, resource-rich website was developed and achieved significant engagement, particularly from Ukraine. These initiatives addressed critical workforce shortages and streamlined processes for recognizing qualifications and integrating professionals into the national healthcare framework, significantly enhancing system capacity and inclusivity.

- **Policy-level discussions initiated in health and care workforce strategy development**

From a long-term perspective, although including health and care workforce (HCWF) stabilization in its Strategic Framework Health 2030 (Specific Goal 2.2) and Implementation Plan, the Czech Republic still needs a comprehensive, long-term national strategy on HCWF. This gap hampers effective HCWF planning, forecasting and management at national and regional levels. Therefore, in the frame of CCS, the MoH plans to establish a robust system for forecasting HCWF needs and a governance structure to support evidence-based decision-making, aligned with the WHO European Region's Health and Care Framework 2023–2030.

The collaboration primarily focuses on providing technical consultations, initiating a constructive policy dialogue and co-developing recommendations for a National Strategy for HCWF in Czechia. The first strategic discussions were initiated in 2024 with the representatives of the MoH and a partnering university to agree on the project scope and activities. A one-week expert mission is scheduled for February 2025 to thoroughly assess the current situation, including a series of structured interviews with key stakeholders to define the exact Roadmap for the development of the National HCWF Strategy.



## Immunization

- **Over 800,000 Ukrainian refugees and Czech citizens were reached by the Vaccination Awareness Campaign via social media platforms**
- **Nearly 4,000 visits gathered on the Ukrainian-language microsite**

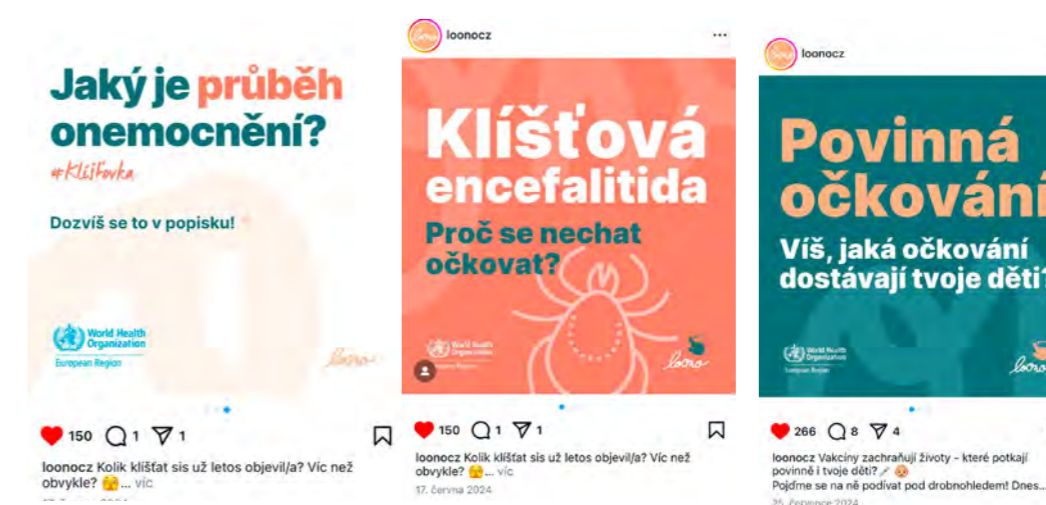
The Vaccination Awareness Campaign, implemented by Loono, a Czech-based non-governmental organization (NGO) focused on prevention and health promotion, with support from WHO, aimed to improve vaccination uptake among both Ukrainian refugees and Czech citizens. WHO provided strategic oversight and technical expertise to ensure the campaign effectively addressed vaccine hesitancy and misinformation. The campaign relied on the use of social media platforms and delivered targeted educational content about the benefits and importance of vaccination via a dedicated website.

- **Support provided to enhance the Central Vaccination Registry**

WHO supported the enhancement of the Central Vaccination Registry by collaborating with the Institute of Health Information and Statistics (IHIS) to upgrade data visualization and reporting features, enabling better retrospective and real-time vaccination data management. These improvements aimed to strengthen immunization monitoring and health decision-making.

- **Over 2,500 vaccines were administered as part of a targeted Hepatitis A vaccination campaign in the Moravian-Silesian region**

WHO supported the MoH in conducting a targeted Hepatitis A vaccination campaign following severe floods in September 2024, aiming to prevent outbreaks in high-risk areas, particularly among Ukrainian refugees and vulnerable populations. A total of 2,503 vaccines (503 for children and 2,000 for adults) were administered in the Moravian-Silesian region, focusing on overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, with WHO providing technical assistance to streamline logistics, ensure effective risk assessments and monitor campaign implementation in collaboration with Regional Hygiene Stations.







## Mental Health

- **Over 5,000 refugees supported in comprehensive Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) programme across regions**
- **More than 3,700 mental health consultations delivered through ACDZ and Trigon projects**
- **Over 600,000 individuals reached via a mental health awareness campaign**

During 2024, WHO continued providing health governance support to the MoH. Regular MHPSS Technical Working Group meetings were held to coordinate refugee MHPSS responses.

WHO implemented a comprehensive MHPSS programme across multiple regions, supporting over 2,700 refugees and delivering more than 3,700 mental health consultations through the ACDZ project (in seven regions) and the TRIGON project (in the Moravian-Silesian region). These efforts included tailored psychological and social support services, speech therapy, and extensive community activities to promote integration, alongside a mental health awareness campaign.

- **13 in-person training sessions conducted on SOFA Trauma-informed Training**
- **1,000 attendees took part in the SOFA Trauma-informed Training sessions and were equipped with the necessary techniques to address common reactions to distressing events effectively**
- **305,000 individuals targeted in a social media campaign**

WHO supported the SOFA Trauma-informed Training project to equip educators, social workers, and psychologists with the skills needed to support Ukrainian refugees affected by adverse events. The initiative included 13 in-person training sessions for 958 participants, providing them with techniques to address common reactions to distressing events effectively, while a complementary social media campaign helped raise awareness about trauma-informed care among the targeted individuals.

- **Over 625,000 Ukrainian refugees reached via a social media campaign aimed at their mental health literacy**
- **17 workshops carried out on mental health topics**
- **236 individuals took part in the workshops on mental health topics**
- **531 persons received individual counselling sessions**
- **380 group sessions were organized**

WHO supported the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) Mental Health Literacy Project to enhance mental health awareness and accessibility for Ukrainian refugees. The project reached over 625,000 people through social media and digital tools, conducted 17 workshops with 236 participants on mental health topics and provided direct support through 531 individual counselling sessions. Furthermore, 380 group sessions were held in order to address refugees' psychological needs.

- **Over 200 professionals equipped with skills to identify and effectively tackle the mental health needs of Ukrainian refugees**

WHO in partnership with Frydek-Mistek Hospital, conducted MHPSS training sessions in Frydek-Mistek, Ostrava, Opava and Havířov, equipping police, firefighters and medical staff with skills to identify and address the mental health needs of Ukrainian refugees. These sessions aimed to enhance emergency personnel's capacity to provide psychological first aid, recognize common reactions to distressing events and establish effective referral pathways.

- **291 individual counselling sessions provided to 57 clients**
- **71 participants supported through group sessions**
- **309 professionals trained to enhance intercultural competence and service delivery**
- **81% of 16 clients showing improved emotional well-being post-intervention**

WHO supported AMIGA's MHPSS pilot programme for Ukrainian refugees with disabilities and those with oncological diagnoses, addressing their unique psychosocial and health needs. The project provided individual counselling sessions, organized



group support for a target group of participants and trained 309 professionals to enhance intercultural competence and service delivery. A detailed analysis identified significant barriers, with language difficulties reported by 85% of respondents as the main obstacle to accessing specialized healthcare, alongside challenges in understanding the healthcare system and long waiting times. Psychological support proved effective, as assessed through the WHO-5 Well-being Index, with 81% of 16 clients showing improved emotional well-being post-intervention. The programme also tackled healthcare access issues through roundtables and collaboration with patient and migrant-support organizations, emphasizing destigmatization, capacity building and tailored support to improve well-being and integration for vulnerable populations.



## Medicine

- **Participation of the MoH in the Novel Medicines Platform supported to develop and ensure equitable access to innovative medicines, with a strong focus on the Czech Republic**
- **Strategic efforts of the MoH to secure access to critical medicines for Czech patients supported**

WHO has provided unwavering support to the MoH in the WHO/Europe Access to Novel Medicines Platform (NMP), where the Czech Republic, with the Deputy Minister, leads the “Solidarity” working stream. Achieving solidarity based on voluntary cooperation turns out to be crucial in patients getting access to expensive medicines. As such, the NMP is a stakeholder collaboration platform aimed at improving access to novel medicines across the European Region. Stakeholders focus on identifying actions and demonstration projects to enhance affordable and equitable access to high-cost, effective medicines.

In addition, WHO commends and supports the MoH in its role within a consultative mechanism uniting EU Member States, key industries, civil society and the scientific community to address critical medicines shortages. Identifying priorities and implementing actionable solutions are essential to this effort. Notably, the MoH’s Deputy Minister was elected co-chair of the first working group in the European Alliance for Critically Important Medicinal Products. Over two years, he has worked with Directorate-General Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (DG HERA) to strengthen EU production capacities and combat drug shortages. The strong collaboration between the WHO and the MoH has laid a solid foundation for strategic discussions on this front and technical consultations in moving this important issue forward.

## Gender-Based Violence

- **10 targeted interventions addressing gender-based violence (GBV) against Ukrainian refugee women**
- **Informational leaflets and videos produced and distributed to reach the target population.**

WHO supported the proFEM GBV Support Programme, which addressed GBV issues affecting Ukrainian refugee women, by conducting a series of targeted interventions, including psychosocial support, legal counselling and crisis intervention. The programme developed and disseminated multilingual materials, such as information leaflets and videos in Ukrainian, to raise awareness about available GBV services, with WHO’s backing ensuring improved accessibility and reducing barriers like language issues, mistrust and stigma.



## HIV/STI

- **158 HIV tests, 130 HCV tests, 123 syphilis tests and 84 HBV tests carried out**
- **51 HIV self-test kits distributed**
- **33,400 educational materials disseminated**
- **20,413 individuals supported with prevention services**

The HIV/STI Support Project, implemented by Ceska Spolecnost AIDS Pomoc with support from WHO aimed to protect Ukrainian refugees and the Czech population from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) while reducing social exclusion. WHO facilitated the project by providing technical and strategic guidance, ensuring comprehensive testing and awareness efforts. Since the beginning of 2024, it has supported 20,413 individuals, enhancing access to testing, counselling and health education.

- **404 students across 23 events reached**
- **17 Ukrainian moderators trained**
- **An average knowledge improvement of 30% reached**

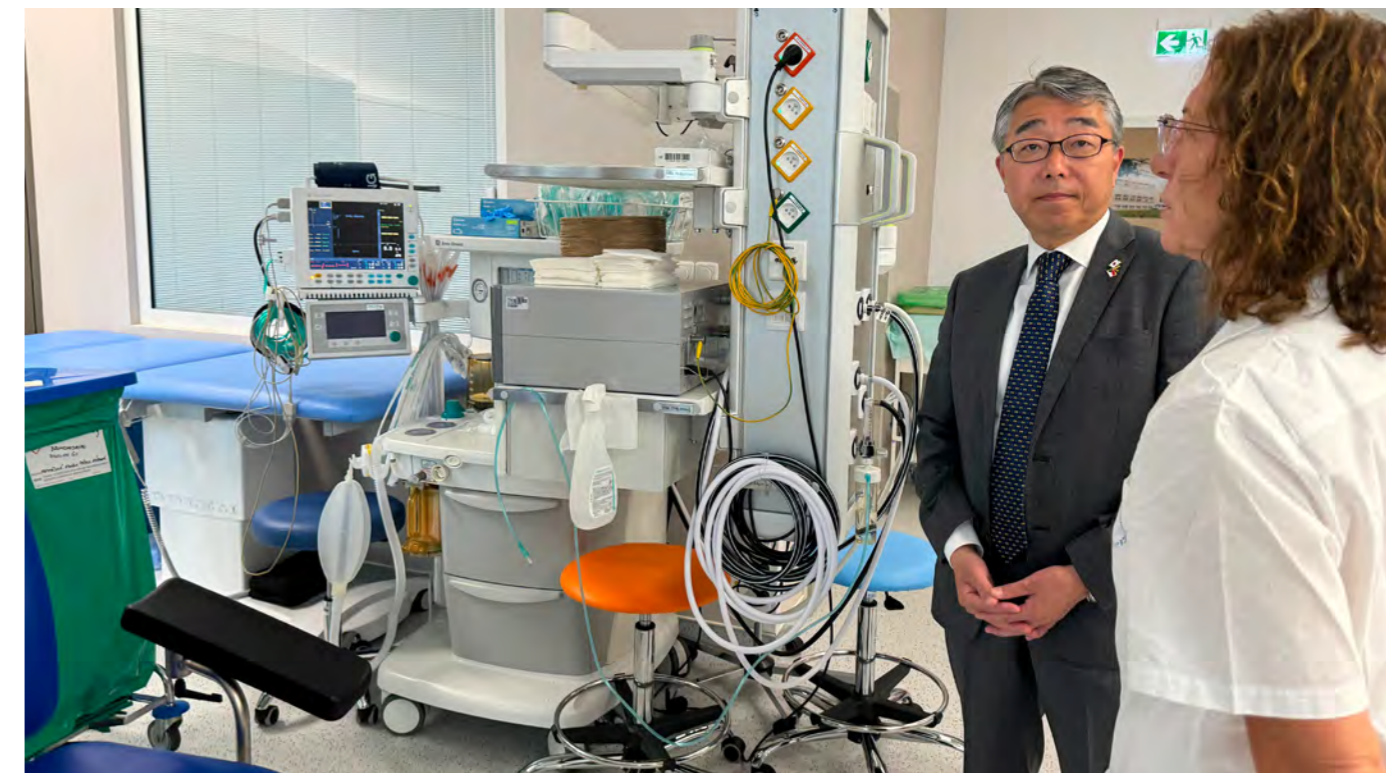
WHO supported the Game Against AIDS project, implemented by Státní zdravotní ústav (SZÚ), which aimed to raise HIV awareness among Ukrainian adolescents through interactive bilingual sessions. The initiative reached 404 students across 23 events, trained 10 Ukrainian moderators, and achieved an average knowledge improvement of 30%, while fostering positive attitudes towards HIV-positive individuals through education and stigma-reduction efforts. Additionally, informational materials and quizzes were distributed in schools, NGOs and medical facilities, with digital resources promoted to amplify the impact.



## Tuberculosis

- **Tuberculosis (TB) diagnostics and treatment capacities improved in Thomayer Hospital equipped through the purchase of modern equipment, as well as hospital furniture**

WHO supported multi drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) diagnostic expansion efforts by equipping the Thomayer Hospital with specialized pediatric equipment, including 15 hospital beds, 36 bedside cabinets, pediatric flexible video bronchoscopes, a mobile X-ray unit, a diagnostic 12-lead ECG machine and video laryngoscopes for pulmonary TB patients. Additionally, the National Reference Laboratory for Mycobacteria received QuantiFERON-TB Gold Plus kits, a Liaison XL analyser and a sequencer/amplifier to enhance diagnostic capabilities.



## Emergency Preparedness

- **Improved emergency preparedness via the development of national capacities, starting a collaboration with university hospitals, holding information sessions, partner assessments and a critical gap analysis**

In 2024, WHO facilitated the development of national capacities for CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear) emergency preparedness as part of the regional CBRN DG SANTE project by establishing monthly coordination calls with the MoH, developing Terms of Reference for critical analyses on chemical substance databases and laboratory capacities and initiating collaboration with 11 university hospitals to map CBRN response procedures, identify gaps and define necessary resources, training and documentation. Additionally, WHO organized information sessions on administrative processes and began implementing partner assessments to support project activities and funding mechanisms, ensuring readiness for effective crisis management.

WHO conducted a desk review to identify critical gaps in emergency response readiness, focusing on enhancing preparedness for public health crises.

## Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs)

- **Development of action plans to reduce chronic disease risk factors supported via expert consultations and evidence-based reviews**

WHO provided expert consultation services to government and public institutions which are working on the preparation of action plans targeting the common risk factors for chronic diseases. WHO reviewed the proposal for the action plan to decrease the consumption of sugar, especially in sugar-sweetened beverages. Moreover, WHO was part of a working group preparing action plans to decrease the availability of alcohol and tobacco products. As support, WHO prepared and provided the government working group with a review of relevant evidence and provided expert feedback on the discussed content of the action plan and suggested interventions.

## Infant and Maternity Health

- **Implementation of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative backed up via translating and adapting relevant materials and assisting in formula marketing regulations**

Since 2023, WHO serves as a member of the working group on infant feeding. The main aim of the working group is to support the implementation of the Baby-Friendly Hospital

Initiative in the Czech Republic, including the implementation of the regulation of the marketing of formula, which will be in line with The International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes Code. As part of the working group, WHO helped with the translation and adaptation of relevant materials and recommendations and assisted with dealing with commercial influence on the ongoing legislative work.

## Tobacco

- **24 schools engaged in using the WHO Nicotine and Tobacco Free Toolkit**
- **1,732 students taking part in a Global Youth Tobacco Survey**
- **Revised educational materials and teacher's guides distributed in participating schools**
- **Consultations and online training sessions provided to further assist the teachers**
- **1 conference showcasing the project best experience**

SZÚ is leading a project addressing a significant health risk in the Czech Republic: tobacco and nicotine use, with a particular focus on the growing popularity of e-cigarettes and vaping. Building on the successful 2023 pilot of the WHO Nicotine and Tobacco Free Toolkit in three schools, the project expanded to 24 schools in total. Revised educational materials from the pilot were complemented by a new educational video on nicotine for children. Schools also organized introductory events aligned with the WHO Nicotine and Tobacco Free Toolkit and 1,732 students participated in a school-based Global Youth Tobacco Survey.

Currently, schools are actively using the provided materials and finalizing strategies for implementing the project at their level. To support teachers, an online training session was conducted for one representative per school, offering access to educational resources and individualized support, including phone consultations. The project, well-received by its target audience, was also showcased at a conference at Palacký University in Olomouc to raise awareness and encourage more schools to join.





## Promotion of Physical Activity

- **Awareness-raising event organized with more than 500 attendees**
- **A special communication campaign launched to stress the importance of the topic with a high-level representation**
- **Technical support and consultations to the Intergovernmental Working Group on physical activity and for WHO guidelines being adapted into the national standards**
- **Preparation of a socio-economic impact study that will be performed in 2025**

WHO has been a key partner in launching the “Active September public” campaign, ongoing since 2023 with various activities. Additionally, WHO joined the “Active Czechia” platform as a main partner, aiming to promote regular physical activity among Czechs while encouraging expert discussions and collaboration with key stakeholders.

In 2024, WHO in collaboration with the Senate of the Czech Republic, the National Sports Agency, the Czech Olympic Committee, SZÚ and other partners organized a major public campaign in the Waldstein Garden of the Senate, which was attended by over 500 participants. The campaign aimed to promote increased physical activity and encourage healthier behavioural patterns in the Czech population.

WHO has further supported physical activity in the country by collaborating with the MoH’s Intergovernmental Working Group to adapt WHO guidelines on physical activity into nationally recognized standards. Additionally, in partnership with the National

Sports Agency, WHO is conducting a study to assess the socio-economic impact of physical activity. The findings, to be presented at a May 2025 conference, will provide essential data to inform policy development, support political negotiations and aid in drafting the National Sport Strategy for 2026–2035.

## Healthy Cities

- **11 facilitated public engagement events**
- **2 online methodological support sessions for city coordinators**
- **2 participative mapping events organized**

In 2024, WHO collaborated with the Healthy Cities Network, achieving significant milestones in promoting civic engagement and participatory planning across Czech municipalities. With the current project still ongoing, its key progress includes 11 facilitated public engagement events held in various cities, gathering community insights on local priorities. Additionally, 2 online methodological support sessions for city coordinators, as well as participative mapping events in Tabor and Ostrava were conducted.

Being in the middle of its implementation, the project is progressing as planned, having achieved 50% of its target for the number of organized online city meetings, 33% for mapping events, and 61% for community engagement events. This steady progress aligns with the project goals. Notably, the events have fostered inclusivity, drawing active participation from diverse groups such as youth and elderly residents, thereby amplifying community voices in local decision-making.

## Health Information and Surveillance

- **System for automated data conversion and QR-code requisitions implemented**

WHO in collaboration with the National HIV and the Viral Hepatitis Reference Lab, implemented a system for automated data conversion and QR-code requisitions, enhancing efficiency and accuracy in HIV/AIDS and viral hepatitis diagnostics.

- **Tuberculosis registry updated**



The Institute of Health Information and Statistics of the Czech Republic (ÚZIS - Ústav zdravotnických informací a statistiky), supported by WHO updated the tuberculosis registry by developing a new module to enhance contact tracing and improve disease monitoring and control.

- **Respiratory Virus Cryobank modernized**

WHO in collaboration with the National Institute of Public Health (NIPH), modernized the Respiratory Virus Cryobank by acquiring advanced freezers, incubators and nucleic acid extraction systems, significantly enhancing its capacity for storing and analysing respiratory pathogens to improve disease surveillance and outbreak response.

- **New Acute Respiratory Infections and Influenza-Like Illness reporting modules developed**

WHO worked with the IHIS to create a new Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI) and Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) reporting modules, enabling better tracking of respiratory disease trends and enhancing public health response capacities in the Czech Republic.

- **Czech health information system reviewed by applying the WHO Support tool methodology**
- **Summary report produced detailing Czech health information system's maturity score and identifying the system's key strengths and weaknesses**
- **Dedicated capacity-building workshop organized as a follow-up to the joint review's findings**

In May 2024, the MoH, the WHO Regional Office for Europe and WHO Country Office in the Czech Republic conducted a joint review of Czechia's health information system (HIS) using the WHO Support tool methodology. This included a preparatory desk review and interviews with key HIS stakeholders during a country visit. The joint review resulted in a detailed summary report, with the assessment's main outcomes presented as an HIS maturity score spider plot, SWOT analysis, and policy considerations. Maturity scores were assigned to six HIS domains: Data sources, Data infrastructure and management, Analysis, Health reporting, Knowledge translation and Governance and resources. While Czechia's HIS shows strong data availability, established health information institutions, and a robust legal framework, there is limited capacity for conducting comprehensive analyses and reporting. Moreover, the review highlighted the need to improve the use of data for policy-making. As a result, a dedicated training session was organized to enhance the knowledge and practical experience of Czech health information specialists.



## Promotion of knowledge management and evidence informed policies

- **2 roundtables organized on the role of science in policy-making during the first-of-its-kind event in the Czech Republic**
- **Over 30 key stakeholders participated in the roundtable discussions, collectively expressing support for evidence-informed decision-making**

In September 2024, two roundtables were held as part of the “Science for Health and Economic Growth” initiative to emphasize the crucial role of science in enhancing public health and fostering economic development. WHO collaborated with the MoH, ÚZIS and the National Institute for Quality and Excellence in Healthcare to bring together over 30 experts and decision-makers from various institutions and sectors involved in the research and design of evidence-informed policies. The event was held a day before the 2nd Global Evidence Summit 2024, a significant international conference discussing key issues across sectors. The importance of the two roundtables was underscored by the presence of representatives from all three levels of WHO to facilitate national efforts for strengthening science ecosystems.

The event aimed to foster a shared understanding among key Czech stakeholders on strengthening evidence-informed policies and practices. The roundtables focused



on leveraging the nation's research and innovation expertise for health and economic impact. Participants eagerly analysed barriers to data collection, use and sharing, and openly shared their practical experiences. Stronger collaboration in this area and across institutions/sectors is anticipated, especially with the planned establishment of a dedicated focal point for Czechia.

## Infodemics

- **2 Infodemic Management Workshops**
- **30 participants from the health and public sectors**
- **Focused on managing misinformation and addressing infodemics during health crises**

The Infodemic Management and Social Media Mastery Workshops consisted of two sessions held in Ostrava and Prague in June 2024. The trainings focused on enhancing participants' skills in managing misinformation, communicating evidence-based content and addressing infodemics effectively, particularly during health crises. The practical hands-on tools' aim is to help national experts to address the challenges of increasing misinformation and build back trust in science and evidence.



## Health Literacy

- **Health literacy campaign reached 328,000 Ukrainian refugees**

The National Association of Patient Organizations, supported by WHO, conducted a health literacy campaign covering various topics about the Czech healthcare system, reaching 328,000 Ukrainian refugees through informational materials and outreach efforts to improve access to services and understanding of the system.

- **Strategic discussions initiated with national counterparts and a university to explore effective ways to enhance digital literacy and foster greater patient participation in health-related decision-making processes**

To address the low levels of digital literacy among Czechs, WHO has been actively engaging with national counterparts at the MoH and Charles University to develop effective strategies. Chronically ill patients have been identified as a key target group, though attention must also be given to both patients and healthcare specialists in light of the upcoming digital health legislation. Stakeholders have agreed that the best approach involves focusing on the effective use of digital tools, enhancing service quality and improving digital literacy. Further discussions to plan potential collaborative efforts to address these challenges are scheduled for January 2025.

## Public health reform and renewed public health education

- **2 Public Health Education Roundtables convened with nearly 40 participants**
- **3 key action items resulted from the organized roundtables**
- **Working group to strengthen public health education established, with two meetings held in 2024**
- **Pilot evaluation carried out to assess the current public health curricula**
- **Common position paper drafted by leading institutions reaffirming their commitment to strengthening cooperation**

The WHO collaborated with Czech universities and health institutions to advance public health education through two key initiatives. First, three Public Health Education Roundtables were convened with nearly 40 participants, resulting in three key action items: professionalizing the public health workforce, assessing current capacities and competencies and advocating for political support to modernize public health

education. Second, a working group for Strengthening Public Health Education was established, co-organized with Charles University, and held two meetings in 2024 (May and December) with leading academic and public health institutions.

The working group conducted a pilot evaluation of current public health curricula and prepared a draft common position paper confirming the interest of participating institutions in strengthening cooperation. The paper is planned for signing in early 2025. The group aims to evaluate the strengths and needs of the education system and workforce and to develop a roadmap for modernizing public health education across all levels. This initiative is well aligned with the ongoing public health system reform, supporting the work of the established National Government Council for Public Health.

## Infrastructure support

- **Expansion of primary healthcare centres supported**
- **70 electronically adjustable beds procured**

WHO provided targeted support to enhance healthcare services for Ukrainian refugees at three key facilities. At the General University Hospital in Prague (VFN) and Rokycany Hospital in the Pilsen Region, WHO supported the establishment and operation of additional PHC centres to expand access to care. For Bohnice Hospital, WHO procured 70 electronically adjustable beds to improve patient comfort and care, particularly for Ukrainian refugee patients. These efforts were part of a broader initiative to optimize healthcare services and address the unique needs of refugees in Czechia.

## Capacity Building

- **2 training sessions organized to equip 24 attendees with skills to effectively manage refugee health projects**

WHO organized two 1.5-day training sessions for 24 participants from NGOs and public health entities, focusing on project planning, monitoring and evaluation to build capacity for sustainable implementation and effective management of refugee health support projects.

- **30 training days organized to ensure sustainable and effective services for Ukrainian refugees**
- **Training and support provided to 209 MHPSS workers across Czech regions**

WHO partnered with Terapeutické centrum Modré dveře, z. ú. to train and support 209 MHPSS field workers across regions with high refugee populations, including Prague and Moravian-Silesian. The project included 30 training days focused on preventing burnout and addressing gaps in support for intercultural workers, ensuring sustainable and effective services for Ukrainian refugees.

- **Trainings for Trainers organized to equip 63 mental health, health and social care professionals with tools to effectively address stress and increase resilience**
- **Ongoing supervision have been performed**

The “Doing What Matters in Times of Stress” and the fundamentals of training non-mental health professionals in scalable psychological interventions training, organized by WHO was a Training of Trainers (ToT) programme held in Prague and Olomouc in May 2024. It equipped 63 Ukrainian and Czech professionals from the mental health, health and social sectors with the tools to address stress in communities and strengthen resilience as well as the foundation to facilitate the competency-based trainings. WHO translated the training materials into Czech and continues to provide supervision to the trained professionals. These trainers are now prepared to deliver the intervention in their communities, train other practitioners and integrate the approach into broader health and social systems, enhancing resilience and mental well-being.

- **16 orientation seminars held for 230 participants as of follow-up Training the Trainers programme**
- **165 individual and 22 group psychosocial support sessions facilitated**

At the end of December 2024 WHO’s “Doing What Matters in Times of Stress” Training of Trainers programme followed up with Ukrainian trainers who participated in the series of May 2024 trainings. As of the second quarter they conducted 16 orientation seminars for 230 participants and facilitated 165 individual and 22 group psychosocial support sessions, primarily for Ukrainian refugees. Plans include expanding trainings on WHO scalable psychological interventions further in 2025.

- **Workshop on the IASC Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Minimum Service Package organized for a total of 22 attendees from various sectors**

WHO in collaboration with UNICEF facilitated a two-day workshop on the IASC Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Minimum Service Package (MHPSS MSP) in the Czech Republic. The workshop introduced participants to the IASC MHPSS MSP by exploring



how current activities in the MHPSS response in the Czech Republic align with the MSP, highlighting potential gaps in the response and elucidating how various sectors can strengthen the MHPSS response by ensuring integrated programming. The workshop, attended by 22 participants from various sectors, included tailored content and tools, with WHO supporting the translation of the MSP materials into Czech to ensure broader accessibility and applicability. Participants reported significant improvements in their understanding and capacity to apply the MSP framework effectively.

- **Population Health Surveillance capacity-building training held for 22 Czech health information specialists**

The WHO Country Office in the Czech Republic supported by a delegation of data and knowledge management experts from the WHO Regional Office for Europe, successfully organized a 5-day in-person training on Population Health Surveillance for health information specialists from Czechia. Held in Prague in November 2024, the training aimed to build capacity in health surveillance and understanding of health information systems, aligned with the May health system review outcomes. It included lectures and practical exercises using Czech data. A total of 22 participants completed the training and received certificates.

## Strategic communication



WHO hosted several high-level visits to showcase the impact of health initiatives for Ukrainian refugees. The Japanese Ambassador, H.E. Mr Kansuke Nagaoka visited Thomayer Hospital to observe improvements in MDR-TB diagnostics supported under WHO-led initiatives. The U.S. Ambassador, H.E. Mr Bijan Sabet visited the CEPASYMED centre under the ACDZ project to learn about community-based mental health services for Ukrainian refugees. Additionally, WHO twice hosted BPRM Regional Coordinators: one visit to the CEPASYMED centre to review mental health and psychosocial support activities, and another visit to the project, which focuses on HIV prevention and treatment for Ukrainian refugees.

In 2024, the WHO Country Office in the Czech Republic, in collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for Europe, organized a series of workshops titled “Infodemic Management and Social Media Mastery”. These workshops aimed to enhance the capacity of the Czech Republic and its key institutions to respond effectively to future public health emergencies. Additionally, the workshops sought to raise awareness about the risks associated with social media communication during health crises. This

initiative underscores the WHO's commitment to improving public health resilience and communication strategies.



To enhance outreach and communication efforts, the WHO Country Office in the Czech Republic has launched a new website, who.cz, along with new social media accounts. These platforms are designed to provide timely and accurate information, engage with the public, and support our mission to improve public health awareness and response capabilities.

### 1st National Development Day at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – 25 April 2024

The historically first National Development Day was dedicated to the representatives of public, private, academic and non-profit sectors to discuss humanitarian and development schemes in the context of foreign policy opened by President Petr Pavel and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jan Lipavsky. The event included panel discussions, interviews with influencers and booths of various embassies, societies and other organizations. The WHO Country Office in the Czech Republic actively participated, and at its booth advised visitors about correct hand hygiene, shared information about WHO's activities aligned with the Czech health system needs.

### Europe Day – 1 May 2024

The Europe Day of 2024 marked the 20th anniversary of the Czech Republic's accession to the European Union. Dozens of embassies and international organizations set up their booths, where they talked to visitors about their relationships with Czechia, offered quizzes and other fun mini-games and presented their countries' local delicacies. WHO also used this opportunity to present its activities and projects, advocating for healthy lifestyles and hand hygiene.

### Sub-regional Meeting on Mid- to Long-term Solutions related to the Ukraine Refugee Health Response – 11-12 June 2024

WHO Country Office in the Czech Republic with the MoH co-hosted a crucial event where dozens of representatives of refugee hosting countries debated the mid-term and long-term consequences of the ongoing Russian invasion in Ukraine on countries' health systems. The participants shared best practices, identified potential solutions

for cross border collaboration, data sharing and sustainable financing for health services provided for integration of refugees.

### Active September – opening day: 4 September 2024



September is the month of physical activity in Czechia, and this Active September, organized by the Active Czechia group (Aktivní Česko), officially began under the auspice of the Senate of the Czech Republic. Visitors could partake in multiple physical activity sessions led by experienced coaches and listen to advocacy interviews with many professionals and official representatives like the President of the Senate, Miloš Vystrčil. WHO joined this event with a booth and raised awareness of prevention with health promotion materials and interviews.

### Ladronkafest – 7 September 2024

Festival of sports, dance and leisure activities, Ladronkafest was meant for everyone interested in a healthy and active lifestyle. WHO joined with its booth and managed to raise awareness of the importance of healthy behaviour and talked to hundreds of visitors who were eager to talk about active life. Specially dedicated to physical activity, WHO spoke about the appropriate number of minutes one should spend doing physical activity and the risks of obesity and encouraged people to move with a frisbee as a reward for those who filled out the quiz correctly.



## Resource mobilization

In 2024, the WHO allocated and donated USD 6,340,341 to implement WHO operations in the country. This funding enabled the WHO to strengthen the health system and address key population health needs, so all people in the Czech Republic, regardless of status have access to health services.

Resource mobilization is vital for the WHO Country Office in the Czech Republic to gather adequate finances to fulfil its goals for a sustained impact on the lives and health of the people. There is a general decline in funding for the Ukraine emergency response, however, health remains a priority for partners.

WHO Country Office in the Czech Republic works closely with the MoH and other health stakeholders to identify needs, strengthen collaboration with donors to increase investment into programmes and ensure that resources are used efficiently and transparently. WHO is grateful to our donors (European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE), the Government of Japan and the USA's Government's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM) for their financial assistance in 2024 for their support to implement its operations.

## Implementing partners

We also extend our sincere appreciation to the MoH of the Czech Republic for their leadership and dedication to improving health systems and fostering resilience within communities.

A special thanks goes to all our implementing partners, whose commitment and expertise have been essential to achieving our shared goals:

- Agency for Migration and Adaptation AMIGA z.s.
- Aliance center duševního zdraví (ACDZ)
- Asociace TRIGON o.p.s.
- Centre of Epidemiology and Microbiology (CEM) at SZU
- Česká společnost AIDS pomoc z.s. (ČSAP)
- Fakultní Thomayerova Nemocnice (FTN)
- General University Hospital in Prague (VFN)
- Healthy Cities of the Czech Republic
- Institut Postgraduálního vzdělávání ve Zdravotnictví (IPVZ)
- Loono z.s.
- Národní asociace patientských organizací (NAPO)
- Národní ústav duševního zdraví NUDZ/NIMH
- Státní Zdravotní Ústav (SZU) / National Institute of Public Health Czech Republic
- Nemocnice ve Frýdku-Místku p.o. (Hospital in Frydek Mistek)
- proFem – centrum pro oběti domácího a sexuálního násilí o.p.s.
- Rokycanská nemocnice
- Society for All z.s. (SOFA)
- Terapeutické centrum Modré dveře
- Ústav zdravotnických informací a statistiky České republiky (UZIS)

Your tireless efforts in 2024 have been pivotal in strengthening healthcare systems, addressing the needs of vulnerable populations and promoting public health. Together, we look forward to continuing our collaborative work in the year ahead.

# Looking ahead

In 2025, the WHO Country Office in the Czech Republic will focus on strengthening public health capacities across key priority areas, ensuring alignment with national health strategies and the needs of vulnerable populations, including Ukrainian refugees.

**Health and Care Workforce (HCWF) Support:** With a rapidly ageing population impacting both patients and the HCWF, and insufficient systems for monitoring, planning and forecasting workforce capacities and distribution, WHO will continue supporting the MoH in developing a national strategy to improve understanding and decision-making regarding HCWF needs. WHO will provide consultations and share international, evidence-based best practices to guide national counterparts. Building on the strategy, efforts will focus on creating a strong institutional environment and enhancing the healthcare system's overall effectiveness—from improved prevention, PHC and public health to a better organized, more resilient healthcare workforce during crises.

**Noncommunicable Diseases/risk factors:** WHO will continue paying close attention to lowering one of the key health risks associated with unhealthy lifestyles – relatively high use of nicotine and tobacco (and the increasing trend of using e-cigarettes and vaping), particularly among the youth, unhealthy diet and high consumption of alcoholic beverages. Czech schools will remain a strong partner on this front, and the WHO Nicotine and Tobacco Free Toolkit will be further promoted across the educational facilities. To assess the scale of the impact achieved via the ongoing Nicotine and Tobacco Free Schools project, the final Global Youth Tobacco Survey will be conducted among the participating students and the feedback will be collected among teachers. More efforts will be put into health promotion, also through the project's presentation towards both a larger group of school representatives, as well as other important stakeholders – all relevant role models in children's formation and upbringing. WHO will also work on increasing awareness of broader determinants of health, including commercial determinants.

**Commercial determinants of health:** Engaging patients and PHC is essential for effective prevention. However, the significant influence of commercial determinants on health policies and environments are often overlooked. Industries have a tremendous impact on how health policies are drafted, decisions are made and how the physical, social and cultural environments are shaped. Recognizing this, WHO will strengthen the country's advocacy efforts for patient protection and communication

regarding the private sector's health-impacting influences through business actions and societal engagements. In 2025, discussions with relevant actors will be initiated to address what these influences mean and how they could be managed effectively in the Czech Republic.

**Antimicrobial resistance (AMR):** AMR poses a significant threat to both patients' health and healthcare systems, including in the Czech Republic. WHO remains committed to supporting national initiatives and assisting in the development of large-scale strategies to mitigate AMR's impact on public health. Key efforts will focus on raising awareness of AMR, promoting responsible antibiotic prescribing and strengthening control and prevention measures.

**Medicines/Novel Medicine Platform:** WHO remains committed to supporting the Czech Republic in its active leadership role in the WHO/Europe Access to Novel Medicines Platform (NMP) with the aim to identify concrete actions, including demonstration projects by 2025, achieving equitable access to innovative medicines and preventing shortages of critical medicines.

**Digital literacy and patient journey:** Digitalization is key to building effective and modern healthcare systems, but its rapid implementation can leave patients struggling to adapt. WHO has prioritized improving care quality, enhancing patients' digital literacy and fostering their engagement in shaping the future of healthcare. When implemented thoughtfully, this approach can strengthen trust in evidence and institutions, improve system efficiency and help patients navigate their care pathways more effectively.

**Prevention and control of infectious diseases:** Efforts will focus on enhancing disease surveillance, expanding vaccination programmes and improving preparedness for emerging infectious diseases to safeguard population health.

**Emergency preparedness:** Strengthening emergency preparedness will be a priority, with a particular focus on CBRN threats. Additionally, addressing the protracted Ukraine refugee crisis in the framework of the Regional Refugee Response Plan. These activities will involve enhancing response capacities, interagency coordination and readiness for health emergencies.

**Mental health:** The expansion of community-based mental health services will be prioritized, with tailored interventions for Ukrainian refugees, and with a particular focus on the elderly and adolescents. These efforts will address psychosocial challenges



and ensure access to culturally sensitive care, building on existing mental health support initiatives. Efforts will also continue to focus on the mental health of the HCWF to help keep the stretched healthcare system resilient.

**Public health reform and public health education:** The COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with pressing challenges such as an ageing population, rising rates of noncommunicable diseases and environmental stressors, has highlighted the urgent need to modernize public health systems in the Czech Republic. Historically rooted in a centralized and hygiene-focused model, the current public health infrastructure requires a shift toward contemporary practices. These include addressing health determinants holistically and preparing a workforce capable of tackling complex and emerging health threats. Key stakeholders, including academic institutions, public health organizations and international partners, have identified a need to reform public health education, emphasizing inter-sectoral collaboration and alignment with international competency frameworks. Working group to define the public health workforce, creating a roadmap for professionalization and developing modernized, unified curricula was already established with WHO support in 2024. Key deliverables include the identification of core competency gaps within the workforce, mapped against the WHO-ASPHER Competency Framework, to ensure alignment with international standards. A comprehensive roadmap will be developed, outlining the steps necessary to modernize public health education and professional pathways. The project aims to establish clear career options for public health graduates and promote appropriate recognition of public health as a vital profession.









## The WHO Regional Office for Europe

The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations created in 1948 with the primary responsibility for international health matters and public health. The WHO Regional Office for Europe is one of six regional offices throughout the world, each with its own programme geared to the particular health conditions of the countries it serves.

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