

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Public Health e.V.

WHO Director General
Dr. Tedros A. Ghebreyesus
WHO Headquarters
Ave Appia
Geneva
Switzerland

Geschäftsstelle
c/o Sebastian Hinck Hemmoorer Pflege GmbH Otto-
Peschel-Str. 22
21745 Hemmoor

geschaeftsstelle@dgph.info

15.08.2025

Open Letter from the German Society of Public Health, the German Society for Medical Sociology and the German Society for Social Medicine and Prevention in support of maintaining health promotion at WHO

Dear Dr. Tedros,

we write to express our profound support for a strong role of the WHO in the area of health promotion. As the Ottawa Charta approaches its 40th anniversary, this is an excellent time to re-confirm WHO's leading role in this essential field. We are fully aware that the WHO faces difficult times and a need for restructuring given funding cuts. However, we have no doubt that strong and visible efforts in health promotion are central to the WHO's mission, and thus need full and sustained support.

As professional and scientific associations committed to advancing public health, we regard health promotion to be crucial for maintaining and improving health and sustainable health systems, and as an essential strategy to improve population well-being and to reduce health inequalities globally. Health promotion plays a central role in key global challenges such as the prevention of non-communicable diseases, health inequalities and inequities, climate change, pandemics and crisis management, disaster and emergency preparedness as well as the social, digital and commercial determinants of health. Health promotion not only enhances the quality of life of populations, it also yields significant social and economic returns.

As said, in 2026, the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion will have its 40th anniversary, which marks an important milestone that underlines the lasting relevance of health promotion worldwide. We regard this anniversary as an excellent opportunity to confirm the WHO's commitment to health promotion and jointly chart a way forward to sustainable progress and achievements in this field.

In Germany, with the passing of multiple initiatives at different levels in legislation, particularly the passing of the German Prevention Act (Präventionsgesetz) in 2015, a weakening of WHO health promotion structures and activities would significantly impair local, national and regional prevention efforts. We build on the WHO to work with us now and in the future.

Therefore, we respectfully urge you to maintain and structurally strengthen health promotion at WHO to maintain global visibility and actions. We recognise health promotion as central in improving

population health, reducing disease burden, and advancing health equity. We are available for collaboration and discussions to ensure that health promotion keeps its important place within the WHO.

Yours sincerely,

Hajo Zeeb
Chair, DGPH

Lena Ansmann
President, DGMS

Andreas Seidler
President, DGSMP

The *German Public Health Association (DGPH e.V.)* is an interdisciplinary and multiprofessional association of individuals, institutions, organizations and professional societies with jurisdiction and responsibility for teaching, research and practice in the field of public health. Our commitment serves the science and practice of preventing disease, prolonging life, and promoting physical and mental health while considering equitable distribution and efficient use of available resources. Increasing health inequalities, health consequences of changes in the world of work, the rise of antibiotic resistance or the consequences of climate change are just some of the current issues. (www.dgph.info)

The *German Society for Medical Sociology (DGMS)* is a scientific professional association dedicated to all medical sociological topics and concerns in research, education, and society. We advocate for better health opportunities for everyone. The core topics of our scientific work include societal influences on health opportunities and disease risks, the health consequences of demographic change, and the social determinants of healthcare. (www.dgms.de)

The *German Society for Social Medicine and Prevention DGSMP* is a medical society for prevention and social medicine with more than 500 members that actively shapes the public health sector in Germany. Its guiding principle comes from Salomon Neumann (1819-1908): "Medicine is a social science". The German Society for Social Medicine and Prevention is committed to the social participation of all people and to reducing health inequalities. The office is located in Berlin. (www.dgsmp.de)