

Checklist for developing National SRH Action Plans and Strategies for accelerating the Universal access to SRH

ANSER network

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Rationale

This document was developed on request of UNFPA EECARO to accelerate the Universal access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) in the region and to assist the countries of the European Region in advancing the national SRH strategies and action plans in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the ICPD Programme of Action (PoA) and other global and regional commitments, including the WHO EURO Action plan for sexual and reproductive health. The latter (*Action plan for sexual and reproductive health: Towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Europe – leaving no one behind*¹) was adopted in 2016 by the WHO European Region Member States except Hungary, Poland and Turkey. The Action Plan provides a framework on how to address sexual and reproductive health in Europe. It compiles existing international commitments made on reproductive health, such as the ICPD programme of Action, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Global Strategy for Women's Children's and Adolescents Health and Health 2020, to a comprehensive plan with clear goals, objectives and key actions.

The next step will be for governments to adapt the plan at national or subnational level according to the country's legislation, priorities and capacities. Those plans will need budget allocations, steps towards implementation and collaboration among the different stakeholders.

This checklist helps to translate the action plan into change on the ground. It provides an overview of minimal standards that have to be taken into account when developing a nationally adapted action plan and supports the implementation of it. It is intended to be used as a guiding and self-assessment tool for the development of the national action plans and strategies, as well as for the review and updating of the above documents.

Checklist

SRHR dimensions

To ensure all people can enjoy their full potential of sexual and reproductive health and rights, it is important to take a comprehensive approach to SRHR. Although some specific topics might be more urging on the agenda than others, or some might need more effort to implement, it is very important to include the full range of sexual and reproductive health issues, as mentioned in the Action Plan, when implementing at national level. This includes:

- Human rights
- Comprehensive Sexuality Education
- High quality SRHR information and services
- (Sexual) violence
- Unmet need for contraception
- Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)
- Infertility
- Reproductive cancers
- Adolescent SRHR
- Access to SRHR for vulnerable populations
- Integration of SRHR in national public health strategies

¹hereinafter referred to as "Action Plan"

International agreements

Countries have been signing international, regional and national declarations and conventions on a very wide range of issues throughout the years. A broad range of them can be directly or indirectly linked to SRHR and thus to the Action Plan. It is important that not only the Action Plan is taken into account when translating it into a national action plan but also other related declarations and conventions are included. What follows is a checklist of declarations and conventions that are related to SRHR and - if relevant for the national context - need to be considered in all future SRHR related policy work, especially the national action plans.

International Declarations

- [International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action \(1994\)](#)
- [The Beijing Platform for Action \(1995\)](#)
- [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development & Sustainable Development Goals \(2015\)](#)

International WHO strategies

- [Global plan of action to strengthen the role of health systems in addressing interpersonal violence, in particular against women and girls, and against children \(2016–2030\)](#)
- [Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health \(2016–2030\)](#)
- [Global health sector strategy on HIV \(2016–2021\)](#)
- [Global health sector strategy on sexually transmitted infections \(2016–2021\)](#)
- [Global health sector strategy on viral hepatitis \(2016–2021\)](#)

Regional WHO strategies

- [Strategy on women's health and well-being in the WHO EURO Region \(2017–2021\)](#)
- [Action plan for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases in the WHO EURO Region \(2016–2025\)](#)
- [Physical activity strategy for the WHO EURO Region \(2016–2025\)](#)
- [Action plan for the health sector response to HIV in the WHO EURO Region \(2016–2021\)](#)
- [Action plan for the health sector response to viral hepatitis in the WHO EURO Region \(2016–2021\)](#)
- [Roadmap of actions to strengthen implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in the EURO Region \(2015–2025\)](#)
- [European Action Plan for Strengthening Public Health Capacities and Services \(2012–2020\)](#)
- [European Action Plan to reduce the harmful use of alcohol \(2012–2020\)](#)
- [European Food and Nutrition Action Plan \(2015–2020\)](#)
- [European Mental Health Action Plan \(2013–2020\)](#)
- [Investing in children: the European child and adolescent health strategy \(2015-2020\)](#)
- [Investing in children: the European child maltreatment prevention action plan \(2015–2020\)](#)
- [Strategy and action plan for healthy ageing in Europe \(2012–2020\)](#)

In addition to agreements that relate directly to SRHR, numerous international agreements on human rights issues are (in)directly of importance for the development of national action plans on SRHR. The most relevant ones are listed below.

International Declarations & conventions

- [Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#)

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- Convention on the Political Rights of Women
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Declaration of Human Duties and Responsibilities
- Declaration of the Rights of the Child
- Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women
- Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict
- Declaration on the Right to Development
- Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons
- International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
- Joint Statement on Ending Acts of Violence and Related Human Rights Violations Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity
- Universal Declaration on Democracy
- Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action

Regional EURO

- Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union
- Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
- Council of Europe Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision Making Process (2009)
- European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
- European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- European Convention on Human Rights
- European Convention on Nationality
- European Social Charter
- Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

Finally, the involvement of civil society and the participation of minority groups in the development and implementation of national SRHR action plans is essential. Notable agreements in that context include the following.

International

- Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms
- Resolution on Protecting Human Rights Defenders

- UN HRC Civic Space Resolution
- UN HRC Resolution on Equal Participation in Political and Public Affairs

Regional EURO

- Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms
- Council of Europe Declaration on equality between women and men as a fundamental criterion of democracy
- Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life
- The European Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level

Building Blocks of Health Systems

In 2007, the WHO report *Everybody's business : strengthening health systems to improve health outcomes : WHO's framework for action* defined six building blocks that make up health systems. National action plans on SRHR should address each of these building blocks in detail, i.e.:

- (i) Service delivery: packages; delivery models; infrastructure; management; safety & quality; demand for care
- (ii) Health workforce: national workforce policies and investment plans; advocacy; norms, standards and data
- (iii) Health information systems: facility and population based information & surveillance systems; global standards, tools (see below)
- (iv) Access to essential medicines: norms, standards, policies; reliable procurement; equitable access; quality
- (v) Financing: national health financing policies; tools and data on health expenditures; costing
- (vi) Leadership/governance: health sector policies; harmonization and alignment; oversight and regulation

Monitoring and evaluation

As mentioned above, the third WHO health system building block consists of health information systems (HIS). Adequate HIS are essential to monitor and evaluate the sound implementation of national action plans and to inform corrective actions if needed. The following measures will need to be taken:

- review of legislative documents, policies and national action plans
- analyze civil registration data and vital statistics
- set up continuous surveillance systems
- survey general population as well as specific target groups
- obtain health facility data

Academic Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Policy

The Academic Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Policy (ANSER) was established by Ghent University in 2016. It aims to be a global resource for SRHR policy research, education and service delivery by:

1. offering an international platform for research on SRHR policy related topics,
2. developing a portfolio of education and training programmes on SRHR policy,
3. and by fostering interaction between SRHR researchers and policy makers.

The establishment of ANSER has to be seen in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), that will require governments across the world to develop and implement new policies in the coming years. Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) lie at the immediate intersect of SDG3 (ensure healthy lives), SDG5 (achieve gender equality) and SDG10 (reduce inequalities), and have a direct link to many other goals. As a consequence, SRHR have a central position in achieving the SDG. ANSER sees it as its role to contribute to the realization of the SDG by:

1. strengthening the evidence base that is needed to ensure the adequacy and effectiveness of SDG-related policies,
2. providing scientific follow-up and monitoring of policy development and implementation,
3. facilitating and nourishing regular exchange of knowledge and sharing of experiences between different types of stakeholders and different countries.

ANSER is characterized by its interdisciplinary and global nature and approach. The network includes academic staff from several disciplines (health sciences, psychology, social sciences...) and its member institutions cover six continents. Currently, ANSER is composed of the following academic institutions: Burnet Institute (Australia) - Institute of Tropical Medicine Antwerp (Belgium) - Ghent University (Belgium) - Universite libre de Bruxelles (Belgium) - Antwerp University (Belgium) - Tsinghua University (China) - National Research Institute for Family Planning (China) - Institute of Population Research (China) - University of Cuenca (Ecuador) - Jimma University (Ethiopia) - Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (Germany) - University of Potsdam (Germany) - Aga Khan University (Kenya) - Technical University of Kenya - University of Nairobi (Kenya) - Riga Stradins University (Latvia) - University Eduardo Mondlane (Mozambique) - Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (Norway) - University NOVA de Lisboa (Portugal) - Foundation for Professional Development (South Africa) - University of the Western Cape (South Africa) - Karolinska Institutet (Sweden) - Mbarara University (Uganda) - University of St. Andrews (UK) - Edge Hill University (UK) - Coventry University (UK) - Institute of Development Studies (UK) - Johns Hopkins University (USA). In addition, the Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung (BZgA) (Germany) holds the status of associated member within the network.

The network is coordinated by Ghent University.

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