



REPORT

ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SEE HEALTH NETWORK SECRETARIAT FOR THE PERIOD January – December 2025

SKOPJE, MARCH 2026

SEE HEALTH NETWORK MEMBER STATES



SEEHN Secretariat

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
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| ALB | Republic of Albania |
| BIH | Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| BGR | Republic of Bulgaria |
| CEI | Central European Initiative |
| EC | European Commission |
| EHFG | European Health Forum Gastein |
| EPHA | European Public Health Alliance |
| EU | European Union |
| Ex COM | Executive Committee |
| GCM | General Council Meeting |
| MKD | Republic of North Macedonia |
| MNE | Montenegro |
| MOH | Ministry of Health |
| MoU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| NFPs | National Focal Points |
| MSs | Member States |
| NHC | National Health Coordinators |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| RCC | Regional Cooperation Council |
| RHDC | Regional Health Development Center |
| MDA | Republic of Moldova |
| OAMGMAMR | Order of Nurses, Midwives, and Medical Assistants of Romania |
| ROU | Romania |
| RS | Republic of Srpska |
| SECID | Southeast European Centre for the Surveillance and Control of Infectious Diseases |
| SEE | South Eastern Europe |
| SEEHN | South Eastern-Europe Health Network |
| SRB | Republic of Serbia |
| TAIEX | EC Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Tool |
| TC | Teleconference |
| WB | Western Balkans ¹ |
| WHO | World Health Organization |
| WHO EURO | WHO Regional Office for Europe |

¹ ALB, BIH, MNE, MKD, SRB common with SEEHN MSs

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Foreword

It is my great pleasure to introduce this document, which reflects the continued commitment of the South-eastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN) to strengthening resilient, equitable, and people-centred health systems across our region. At a time when health systems are facing increasing pressures—from demographic shifts to evolving public health challenges—the importance of strategic collaboration and shared learning among our Member States has never been more evident.

This work stands as a evidence to the collective efforts of SEEHN Member States, partners, and experts who have contributed their knowledge, experience, and vision. It builds on a strong foundation of regional cooperation and demonstrates our shared ambition to translate evidence into action, policies into practice, and commitments into measurable results that benefit our populations.

From a personal perspective, I am particularly encouraged by the spirit of solidarity and openness that continues to define SEEHN. Over the years, our Network has evolved into a trusted platform for dialogue, innovation, and mutual support, unique in the South Eastern Europe. This document not only captures technical progress, but also reflects the strength of partnerships and the willingness of countries to learn from one another in pursuit of common goals.

Looking ahead, I am confident that the insights and directions outlined here will serve as a valuable guide for future action. The SEEHN Secretariat remains fully committed to supporting Member States in advancing these priorities, fostering regional synergies, and strengthening the link between national reforms and broader European and global health agendas.



Dr Tatiana Paduraru
Head of the SEEHN Secretariat

Introduction

The South-Eastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN) Secretariat has played a pivotal role in advancing regional health cooperation throughout 2025. This report provides a technical overview of the Secretariat's activities, achievements, and strategic engagements between January and December 2025 and is submitted to **the attention of the Executive Committee** according to the Annex 1: Roles and responsibilities of the SEE Health Network Secretariat of the *Memorandum of Understanding: Future of the South-eastern Europe Health Network in the framework of the South East European Co-operation Process*.

1. The SEEHN Secretariat structure

During the reporting period January - December 2025 the SEEHN Secretariat technical and administrative staff has been fulfilling its roles and responsibilities, including changes as following:

- SEEHN Secretariat Head – recruited staff of the SEEHN Secretariat, since January 2017, Acting Head since December 2024 elected Head of the Secretariat since 48th SEEHN Plenary meeting in June 2025,
- Finance Officer (Contract since September 2016 as Administrative Officer and later with contract as Finance Officer since September 2018),
- Technical Officer, recruited staff of the SEEHN Secretariat, since January 2017, Acting Head since December 2024. One part-time consultant is contracted from Montenegro since October 2025,
- Administrative Assistant, part-time recruited staff of the SEEHN Secretariat. This full-time position is to be advertised in 2026, per need.
- Legal officer/office. This position to be advertised in 2026, per need.
- Communication officer (since October 2020), one part-time consultant is contracted from Romania.
- IT Specialist, part-time staff member of the Secretariat: (contract since March 2016).

Throughout the past year, Dr. Tatiana Paduraru was Acting Head of the SEEHN Secretariat until she was selected for permanent Head of the Secretariat in June 2025 during the 48th SEEHN Plenary Meeting.

2. SEEHN Executive Committee

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of 29th April 2009 of the SEE Health Network, and its Addendum of 2011, the SEEHN High Level Representatives in line with Article VI – Governance and leadership: Presidency, Executive Committee and regional meetings named the National Health Coordinators (NHCs).

During the closed session of the 47th Plenary Meeting, held on 21st June 2024, the following members of the SEEHN Executive Committee were elected:

Chair: Dr Svetlana Nicolaescu, National Health Coordinator, Deputy Secretary General, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Moldova, re-elected for the second mandate.

Members of the SEE Health Network Member States Executive Committee:

- **Dr. Jurica Arapovic**, SEEHN Focal Point, Assistant Minister for Health, Ministry of Civil Affairs, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- **Ms Revital Maimeran**, SEEHN NHC, Foreign Affairs Manager, Ministry of Health, State of Israel
- **Prof Dr Florentina Furtunescu**, Head of the Unit for Monitoring, Planning and Risk Communication in Communicable Diseases, National Institute of Public Health, Romania
- **Dr Niko Hyka**, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Republic of Albania. Due to changes in Albanian Government Cabinet, Dr Hyka was replaced by **Dr Eugena Tomini**, Deputy Minister of Health and Social Welfare. She is serving as SEEHN NHC and member of SEEHN Executive Committee, since 15th October 2025.

All members of the Executive Committee with the Chair were appointed to serve a mandate of two years in the period July 2024 – June 2026.

The Executive Committee held four meetings in total during 2025 (Fourth, Sixth and Seventh as online meetings and Fifth as hybrid one). The Fourth Ex Com meeting was organized online in April 2025, to discuss and agree on interview and evaluation forms for the received applications for the position Head of Secretariat. The Fifth meeting was held hybrid (in person in May in Skopje and part of Ex Com members joined online). The meeting aimed to conduct the interviews and evaluation assessment of the candidates for the position Head of Secretariat. The Sixth Ex Com meeting was held online in June, prior the 48th SEEHN Plenary meeting in Sofia, to discuss and approve the Plenary Program and documents, along with Semi-annual Financial Report, and endorse the proposal for the Dr Alexandre Berlin Award submitted by the Ministry of Health of Bulgaria. The Seventh Ex Com meeting was held online in December, to discuss and approve the activity report for the 2025 along with projected 2025 Financial Report of the SEEHN Secretariat, as well as to approve the projected 2026 Financial Plan of the SEEHN Secretariat.

3. Financial status and yearly contributions from the SEEHN Member States

During 2025, contributions were paid by:

- Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Republic of Serbia, Romania, Republic of Bulgaria, State of Israel and Republic of Moldova for 2025,
- Republic of North Macedonia paid for 2024 and 2025,
- Republic of Albania paid for 2023 and 2024.

As of December 2025, contributions are pending from Republic of Albania (for 2025). Total projected income from contributions in 2026 is 238.000 euros. The projected income from projects in 2026 is 70.000 euros.

The 2025 Projected Annual Financial Report incorporating actual income and expenditures as of 30 November 2025 and estimated figures for December 2025, was presented and approved by SEEHN Ex Com members during their 7th TC meeting, conducted online via zoom on 23 December 2025. The 2025 Final Annual Financial Report was prepared following the close of the budget year, incorporating all actual income and expenditures through December 2025. The Final Report was submitted to the Executive Committee members via email written correspondence. Total Actual Expenses as of 31 December 2025 were 217.614 EUR.

The 2026 Projected Financial Plan with a ceiling of 360.685 EUR, was presented and approved by SEEHN Ex Com members during their 7th TC meeting, conducted online via zoom on 23rd December 2025. The 2026 Final Financial Plan was prepared following the close of the budget year, incorporating the figures for actual bank balance as of December 31st, 2025 and keeping the approved ceiling of 360.685 EUR. The Final 2026 Financial Plan was submitted to the SEEHN Executive Committee members via email written correspondence.

4. SEEHN Communication and visibility activities

Throughout the reporting period, encompassing both in-person and online operations, the presence of a Communication Officer, whose involvement was sustained throughout 2025, has been instrumental in enhancing the visibility and representation of SEEHN. This individual played a key role in branding and tailoring the primary messages on behalf of SEEHN, during the presidencies of Republic of Bulgaria and State of Israel.

In the same timeframe, the IT maintenance expert for the Network, who serves as a part-time staff member at SEEHN Secretariat, has consistently supported the IT requirements of the Secretariat. Additionally, this expert has been responsible for the upkeep of the SEEHN website, Facebook page, and Instagram page.

SEEHN Secretariat celebrated Health Calendar Days joining the global and regional campaigns and raising awareness on important and challenging public health issues such as:

1. World Cancer Day (Feb 4, 2025)
2. World Obesity Day (Mar 5, 2025)
3. World Health Day (Apr 7, 2025)
4. International Nurses Day (May 12, 2025)
5. World No Tobacco Day (May 31, 2025)
6. World Blood Donor Day (Jun 13, 2025)
7. World Patient Safety Day (Sep 17, 2025)
8. World Mental Health Day (Oct 10, 2025).

5. SEEHN Activities at the Political Level

During 2025, two countries have had their Presidency mandates within the SEEHN. The first part of the year, the Presidency Mandate was held by the Republic of Bulgaria (July 2024 until the end of June 2025), followed by the Presidency of Israel for the following six months (July - December 2025, and to continue up to June 2026).

The SEEHN Secretariat in collaboration with the **SEEHN Presidency of the Republic of Bulgaria** coordinated, developed and carried out all the technical and logistical preparations for the **48th Plenary Meeting: *Health Promotion and Disease Prevention – Acting Together for Better Health for All*, held in Sofia, on 17-18th June 2025.**

The SEEHN Secretariat carried out also the following communication strategies in order to manage the modest financial resources and secure timeliness of the implementation of the planned activities at regional level:

- *Negotiation on exchanging with the Presidency and Ex Com by correspondence/online/in-person*
- *Submitting to the NHCs for consultation and collecting approvals by correspondence*
- *Setting up Calendar of events for the Presidency/collecting data by correspondence*

As of 1st July 2025, to 30th June 2026, SEEHN Presidency is to be hold by the State of Israel.

Moreover, the SEEHN Secretariat main efforts were focused on the coordination and signing through letters the **Belgrade Pledge**. So far, the Ministers of the following SEEHN Member States had signed the strategic document: ALB, BGR, ISR, MDA, MNE, MKD, ROU and SRB. The signing letter is expected from BIH.

5.1. SEEHN Secretariat core activities

5.1.1 48th SEEHN Plenary Meeting

The **48th SEEHN Plenary Meeting: *Health Promotion and Disease Prevention – Acting Together for Better Health for All***, was organized on 17th and 18th June 2025 in Sofia, Republic of Bulgaria.

High-level representatives from SEEHN Member States, diplomatic corps and international partners were brought together for in-depth dialogue, exchange of best practices, and the development of coordinated approaches to enhance health promotion and disease prevention across the SEEHN region.

Throughout the thematic sessions, Member State representatives presented national experiences and key achievements in health promotion and disease prevention through public health campaigns. The meeting covered various public health challenges including non-communicable diseases, vaccination programs, nutrition policies, and health communication campaigns, with participants sharing experiences and best practices from different countries. Key discussions centred around regional cooperation, digital health initiatives, and the importance of multi-sectoral approaches to improve health outcomes, with the incoming Israeli Presidency outlining their priorities for the upcoming term.

Discussions also addressed public health policies and their impact, new avenues for partnerships and strengthening efforts for better healthcare.

The plenary included a special award ceremony honouring Dr Maria Ruseva of Bulgaria with the 2025 **Dr Alexandre Berlin Prize** for her outstanding contributions to public health and her pivotal role in the establishment and development of the SEEHN, and whose decades-long career has significantly advanced disease prevention and health promotion in Bulgaria and across the region.

Dr Ivo Rakovac, WHO Regional Advisor on NCD Surveillance, delivered a comprehensive **keynote presentation** on the burden of noncommunicable diseases in the SEEHN region. The SEEHN region continues to face a disproportionately high burden of NCDs and their associated risk factors, surpassing the average levels observed across the wider region. Dr Rakovac introduced WHO's new Division on Prevention and Health Promotion and encouraged SEEHN countries to adopt evidence-based policies, strengthen surveillance systems, and invest in prevention. He underscored the critical importance of implementing WHO's 'Best Buys' and 'Quick Buys' interventions as a means to reduce premature mortality and enhance population health outcomes.

The **SEEHN Presidency Report**, presented during the meeting, highlighted the accomplishments and challenges faced by the Bulgarian Presidency which three strategic pillars were: health diplomacy, digital transformation, and healthcare improvement. Key achievements were highlighted: *Executive Training Course on Global Health Diplomacy in Times of Emergencies and Strengthening Preparedness*, the inauguration of a new Regional Health Development Centre for Nursing and Midwifery, High-Level Digital Health Expert Meeting in Sofia "*Towards universal health coverage - give health an e-chance!*", advancing regional dialogue on nursing leadership and health workforce mobility, strengthening partnerships with WHO, UNICEF, and the RCC (participation and representation of the SEEHN at high-level meetings).

Furthermore, the **Roadmap of the Israeli Presidency** was presented foreseeing 4 core priorities: emergency preparedness and response, digital health cooperation, public health innovation and nursing and midwifery leadership.

Member States presented **countries' experiences on public health campaigns on healthy lifestyles and disease prevention**. Several events and initiatives were presented during the plenary including covering important public health areas, including: vaccination and immunization policies, nutrition and healthy lifestyles, digital health and innovation, youth and mental health.

During a **closed session** dedicated to Member States representatives, in accordance with the SEEHN Memorandum of Understanding and the Secretariat Statute, the selection process was conducted and the endorsement of Dr Tatiana Paduraru as the new Head of the SEEHN Secretariat was announced to Plenary.

Regional cooperation and partnerships were as always important part of the Plenary and contributions from EuroHealthNet, UNICEF, and WHO emphasized the importance of cross border collaboration, policy alignment, and shared platforms for knowledge exchange.

The SEEHN Plenary Meeting concluded with a strong reaffirmation of regional solidarity, shared responsibility, and the transformative power of cooperation in public health.

The summary note on the Plenary meeting is available at: <https://seehn.org/the-south-eastern-europe-health-network-seehn-is-convening-its-48th-plenary-meeting/>

5.2 Protocol Activities SEEHN Secretariat

Throughout the reporting period, Dr Tatiana Paduraru has effectively executed her role as the Acting Head and Head of the SEEHN Secretariat, demonstrating adept leadership. She consistently maintained high-level diplomatic communication with the Ministries of Health in SEEHN Member States. Furthermore, Dr Paduraru represented the region in the international forums, continuously fostering crucial relationships with key stakeholders pivotal to SEEHN.

5.2.1 Albania and SEEHN regional health cooperation and priorities

The SEEHN Secretariat and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Albania reinforced regional cooperation during a meeting in Tirana on 4th February. Discussions led by Mr. Niko Hyka, Deputy Minister and Dr. Tatiana Paduraru, Acting Head of the SEEHN Secretariat reaffirmed shared commitment to strengthening public health systems, ensuring financial sustainability and advancing key health priorities for the region and the importance of aligning national strategies with SEEHN's collective agenda. Albania's active participation in network was commended and highlighted the importance of its representation in SEEHN's Executive Committee for strong governance and regional health diplomacy. Furthermore, the major two outcomes of this visit resulted in the signing of the Belgrade Pledge by Albania's Minister of Health, and consecutive two pending annual payments to the SEEHN Secretariat. This accomplishment reaffirmed SEEHN's dedication and Albania's inclusive collaboration and solidarity across South Eastern Europe.

5.2.2 Meeting with Minister of Health of North Macedonia

In June 2024, Dr. Tatiana Păduraru, Head of the SEEHN Secretariat, held a high-level meeting with Dr. Azir Aliu, Minister of Health of the Republic of North Macedonia, to align regional health goals with national strategic priorities. The discussion centred on North Macedonia's ambitious roadmap for health system modernization, which is built upon five strategic pillars: infrastructure development, digital transformation, human resource investment, financial reform focusing on prevention, and enhanced transparency. Minister Aliu emphasized the importance of a "patient-centred" approach, highlighting plans for a wide-scale digital overhaul and the accreditation of public hospitals to ensure equitable access and high-quality care.

Dr. Păduraru reaffirmed SEEHN's commitment to supporting these reform efforts through the Network's established framework for knowledge exchange and regional collaboration. The meeting underscored the vital role of the SEEHN Secretariat which headquartered in Skopje, in fostering solidarity across South-Eastern Europe. By synchronizing national health agendas with regional expertise, SEEHN continues to serve as a primary catalyst for sustainable health outcomes and administrative efficiency throughout the region.

5.2.3 Bilateral Meeting with Romania's Minister of Health

At the end of July, the SEEHN Secretariat held a bilateral meeting with Romania's Minister of Health, Dr. Alexandru-Florin Rogobete. Discussions reinforced cooperation, set priorities for regional health

collaboration, and explore new opportunities for joint initiatives highlighting Romania's active role in shaping SEEHN's agenda. Key discussion points included strengthening emergency preparedness, promoting health equity, advancing digital health, and supporting workforce development. During the meeting, the strategic role of Romania was considered and potential hosting of the next SEEHN Ministerial Forum 2027 as well as establishment of a regional hub on digital health. SEEHN's commitment to inclusive, evidence based regional action was reaffirmed.

5.2.4 Cooperation with Republic of Moldova

On 7th August, Dr Tatiana Paduraru and dr Ala Nemerenco, the Minister of Health of Moldova set a strategic course for the upcoming SEEHN Presidency following current Israeli presidency. The dialogue focused on strengthening regional health cooperation, aligning priorities, and ensuring Moldova's leadership contributes to advancing solidarity and resilience across South Eastern Europe. Moldova's strategic priorities will focus on strengthening the health workforce, upgrading infrastructure, and enhancing the quality of care across Member States. The meeting also addressed developing a regional initiative for EU health negotiations and implementation, alongside acknowledging Moldova's leadership in tobacco cessation.

5.2.5 Cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina

SEEHN renewed regional cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina through an online meeting that brought together key representatives from the SEEHN Secretariat and Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to advance the renewal of regional cooperation on mental health. The discussion centred on the revitalization of the Regional Health Development Centre (RHDC) for Mental Health, which has been inactive for ten years, and included plans for reappointing national focal points and exploring collaboration and funding opportunities with organizations like WHO/Europe and the EU. The participants welcomed the appointment of Ms. Lejla Krvavac as the new Director of the RHDC on Mental Health and committed to developing a roadmap to ensure mental health remains a regional public health priority.

5.2.6 Meeting with State Secretary of Health of Montenegro

On 25 September, SEEHN Secretariat Director, Dr. Tatiana Paduraru met with Montenegro's State Secretary of Health, Ms Mirjana Vlahovic-Andrijasevic, to strengthen bilateral cooperation and align priorities with regional strategies. The meeting highlighted SEEHN's role in fostering dialogue and ensuring authentic representation of Member States in regional health policy.

5.2.7 Meeting with Director of the Institute for Public Health of Montenegro

In a **bilateral meeting between the SEEHN Secretariat and the Institute of Public Health of Montenegro**, Acting Director Dr. Păduraru and Director Dr. Snežana Barjaktarević Labović reaffirmed their joint commitment to tackling NCDs and enhancing cancer screening across the region. Key outcome was the exploration of capacity-building opportunities for Montenegro's national cancer screening programs, including a potential study visit to Slovenia to exchange expertise in breast and cervical cancer protocols. This engagement underscored the added value of



SEEHN's cross-border collaboration in strengthening public health systems and improving early detection and treatment outcomes for NCDs in the region.

5.2.8 meeting with UNFPA Representative and Country Director for Western Balkan Countries

Dr. Tatiana Paduraru, hosted the meeting with **UNFPA** Representative and Country Director for Western Balkan Countries, **Dr. Justine Coulson**, and **Dr. Tamar Khomasuridze, MD, PhD**, SRH Regional Advisor, UNFPA Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and representative of UNFPA Country Office in North Macedonia. The meeting took place in Skopje and explored the areas of mutual interest for collaboration, highlighting several priority fields (more details [here](#))

6. SEEHN Secretariat Technical Activities in January - December 2025

6.1 Technical Activities with Presidencies

Technical activities carried out under the SEEHN Presidencies play a pivotal role in advancing the Network's agenda and ensuring continuity of regional cooperation. Through the organization of technical meetings, thematic workshops, and collaborative initiatives, Presidencies strengthen the Network's operational capacity, foster dialogue among stakeholders, and contribute to the visibility and sustainability of SEEHN's work across the region.

6.1.1 High-Level Digital Health Expert Meeting

The SEEHN in collaboration with the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Bulgaria, successfully concluded a high-level expert meeting on the theme “*Towards Universal Health Coverage—Give Health an e-Chance!*”, held in Sofia, Bulgaria on 10 April 2025. The meeting brought together representatives from SEEHN Member States, digital health leaders, policymakers, and regional experts in Sofia to explore the transformative role of digital health in strengthening health systems and accelerating progress towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

The event featured national case studies and shared experiences from Albania, Bulgaria, Israel, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, and Serbia. The Bulgarian Ministry of Health presented the country's advancements in digital health infrastructure, including integrating health information systems and digital transformation strategies.

Key discussions focused on: interoperability of health systems across borders, alignment with the European Health Data Space, policy frameworks that support the ethical and secure exchange of health data and strengthening digital health governance and innovation ecosystems.

This expert meeting was vital in fostering cross-border collaboration and shaping a shared digital health vision for the SEEHN region. Participants jointly identified strategic priorities for regional cooperation, including interoperability, cybersecurity, and capacity-building.

The SEEHN efforts in this field continued under the next, Israeli Presidency with SEEHN, remaining committed to supporting its Member States in harnessing the power of digital technologies to improve health outcomes and equity across South-eastern Europe.

6.1.1 Regional webinar “*Digital Health – From Theory to Practice.*”

On 26th November, SEEHN and Ministry of Health of Israel co-hosted a regional **webinar “Digital Health – From Theory to Practice.”** The webinar successfully advanced the regional dialogue on digital health transformation, providing both strategic insights and practical examples from Israel's experience. It reinforced the importance of interoperability, AI governance, and workforce development as foundational elements of modern health systems. The session also laid the groundwork for the high level in person workshop in Israel in early 2026, which will offer SEEHN Member States an opportunity to engage directly with leading institutions and explore real world digital health solutions. SEEHN Secretariat, the Ministry of Health of Israel, and WHO Regional

Office for Europe reaffirmed their commitment to supporting Member States in building resilient, interoperable, and future ready health systems.

6.2 Technical Activities with RHDCs

The strategic planning declaration - the Belgrade Pledge, calls for cooperation upon joint action of the Member States with partners on the following main directions:

- **Political:** Keep health and well-being high atop the political and investment agendas of the SEEHN and its Member States and partners
- **Investment:** Promote increasing investments in health and well-being in the SEE, and improve its value by combining the resources of SEEHN Member States and partners
- **Technical: Promote united action and coherence among Member States and partners in implementing the vital areas for action in the SEE 2022-2026 strategy.**

To date, there are **ten formally designated RHDC for technical collaboration** in various mutually agreed public health areas.

The performance of the RHDCs varies between Member States and is mostly dependant on the financing of their activities. In line with the SEEHN MoU, each Member State with a designated RHDC does have financial obligations only during the first year of the respective Centre's designation. After that, RHDC shall take the ownership with the support of the SEEHN to fundraise, implement, manage and coordinate the regional collaborative activities in the respective area.

The SEEHN Secretariat continued the work as planned to provide further support to the SEE RHDCs as it has been agreed that the technical collaboration and outcomes at regional and national levels is of utmost importance for the Network and its international visibility.

Following the adopted SOPs for RHDCs as well as conclusions from the Third Ex Com meeting held in Sarajevo on 19 June 2024, and Closed Session of the 47th SEEHN Plenary (21 June 2024), the Secretariat managed the process of revision of the RHDCs regional efforts and in communication with the respective Member State will agree on the status of each RHDC. In the reporting period, communication has been held with each Member State Member State on the value of respective RHDC. As a result, the RHDC on Blood Safety hosted by Romania, view the long period of inactivity ceased its existence.

In order to ensure the RHDCs' work is both sustainable and regionally impactful, with integrated technical and financial support, the RHDCs were recently asked to submit Biannual plans detailing their operations, finances, and challenges. The Secretariat is now holding technical meetings with each centre to assess needs and opportunities.

6.2.1 Regional Nursing Leadership (Regional Health Development Centre on Nursing and Midwifery ROU)

SEEHN reinforced regional nursing leadership at the **21st National Symposium of the Macedonian Association of Nurses and Midwives in Ohrid, North Macedonia**, focusing on "*Nursing and Midwifery – Challenges and Opportunities for the Future*". Through the SEEHN RHDC on Nursing and Midwifery, the Secretariat emphasized empowerment, leadership, and collaboration in advancing

nursing and midwifery agendas, underscoring the essential role of frontline professionals in resilient health systems. Ms. Roxana Hainagiu, Head of International Relations Department of the SEEHN Regional Health Development Centre on Nursing and Midwifery, delivered a presentation emphasizing the importance of empowered leadership in nursing and midwifery, conveying messages from SEEHN leaders who lauded the Macedonian community's efforts in professional advancement. The presentation highlighted the RHDC's regional initiatives in workforce data, leadership development, and evidence-based policy, undertaken in collaboration with the WHO and SEEHN Secretariat, underscoring SEEHN's dedication to strengthening the nursing and midwifery workforce across South-Eastern Europe.

6.2.2 Technical Meeting on NCDs Population-Based Surveys in SEEHN Member States (Regional Health Development Centre on Nursing and Midwifery on NCDs MNE)

On 25–26 March 2025, SEEHN Secretariat and RHDC on NCDs organized a technical meeting in Podgorica focused on non-communicable disease population-based surveys across its Member States. The event provided a collaborative platform for representatives from SEEHN Member States, public health experts, and international partners, including the WHO Regional Office for Europe, to exchange knowledge and experiences. Dr. Ivo Rakovac, Regional Adviser on NCDs Surveillance, WHO Regional Office for Europe delivered a keynote presentation on Progress towards NCD targets and strengthening NCDs surveillance in SEEHN Member States. Over two days, participants engaged in plenary discussions, roundtable sessions, and country presentations addressing key topics such as: best practices and challenges in conducting NCDs population-based surveys, financial and sustainability models for long-term NCDs surveillance, utilizing survey data for policy development and health system transformation, strengthening regional collaboration and alignment with WHO standards. The meeting fostered dynamic dialogue on NCDs data collection, standardization, sustainability, and policy utilization. By sharing insights and experiences, participants identified opportunities to build a more effective and harmonized approach to NCDs surveillance across the region. Key outcomes included the development of actionable recommendations for sustainable NCDs data collection and the recognition of the need to support SEEHN Member States in aligning with WHO guidelines to close gaps with other European countries. The conclusions from this meeting will serve as a roadmap for SEEHN Member States, guiding efforts toward more robust NCDs data systems and evidence-based policy approaches. With continued collaboration, these initiatives are expected to significantly strengthen public health strategies and outcomes in the region.

6.2.3 Regional Online Consultation: “Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures” RHDC on Sexual and reproductive health (Regional Health Development Centre on Sexual and Reproductive Health ROU)

On 28 May 2025, the SEEHN Secretariat, in collaboration with WHO/Europe and the Regional Health Development Centre on Sexual and Reproductive Health hosted by Romania, convened a

regional online consultation dedicated to strengthening maternal and newborn health systems across SEEHN Member States.

Organized under the World Health Day 2025 theme “*Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures*”, the consultation brought together ministries of health, healthcare professionals, and international partners to exchange best practices and align on regional priorities. Opening remarks were delivered by Dr. Natasha Azzopardi-Muscat (WHO/Europe) and Dr. Tatiana Paduraru (SEEHN Secretariat), who emphasized the importance of regional solidarity and systems thinking in advancing maternal and newborn health. The keynote address was presented by Dr. Oleg Kuzmenko (WHO/Europe), who outlined regional trends and underscored the need for equity-focused, data-driven interventions. Member States contributed national experiences, highlighting both innovations and persistent challenges in areas such as midwifery, workforce development, and community-based care.

The consultation, moderated by Dr. Mihai Horga (RHDC on SRH), concluded with a collective call for sustained collaboration and commitment to ensuring that every mother and newborn in South-Eastern Europe has access to safe, high-quality care. A comprehensive report followed, capturing regional recommendations for subsequent actions and policy development.

6.2.4 Pandemic Preparedness and Vaccine Deployment SECID (Regional Health Development Centre on Nursing and Midwifery on Communicable Diseases ALB)

SECID acting as SEEHN RHDC on CDs, convened a meeting in Vienna with national and regional health experts from SEEHN Member States to strategize on reinforcing pandemic preparedness and vaccine deployment capabilities across the region. During the meeting, titled “*Establish Regional & Country Capacities for Vaccine Deployment & Pandemic Preparedness*”, participants shared national experiences, identified common challenges such as regulatory hurdles and supply chain bottlenecks, and explored pathways for joint regional action and harmonized procurement processes. (link to web) Key priorities for SEEHN's upcoming 2025-2026 presidency include strengthening emergency preparedness, bridging the digital divide, and advancing nursing and midwifery leadership, all aimed at reducing health inequities and ensuring timely, equitable vaccine access in future pandemics through sustained political will and coordinated regional efforts.

6.2.5 Erasmus Final Telenursing Conference (Regional Health Development Centre on Nursing and Midwifery ROU)

Acting Head of the SEEHN Secretariat, participated as a panellist in the **Erasmus Final Telenursing Conference**, organized by the European Nursing Council in Brussels. The event convened leading European institutions, regulators, and policymakers to discuss the future of remote nursing and digital healthcare delivery. Dr. Păduraru’s intervention, titled “*The Role of Digital Health in SEEHN Member States*,” emphasized the transformative potential of telenursing to address regional healthcare challenges—particularly in rural and underserved areas. She outlined SEEHN’s strategic direction toward digital health integration, spotlighting the role of nurses and midwives as central agents of change. Her contribution reinforced key priorities such as workforce development, regional cooperation through RHDCs, and the importance of building partnerships with EU and global actors.

Notably, she proposed establishing a regional platform for telenursing training and knowledge-sharing—an initiative that could be anchored by SEEHN’s RHDC on Nursing and Midwifery, hosted by Romania. This participation elevated SEEHN’s visibility in a pan-European digital health dialogue and generated interest in deeper regional collaboration on digital care, marking a concrete opportunity for policy and capacity-building alignment in the field of telenursing.

6.2.6 High-level event in Bucharest on leadership in midwifery and nursing (Regional Health Development Centre on Nursing and Midwifery ROU)

In 2025, SEEHN reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening the professions of nursing and midwifery through a landmark event held in Bucharest under the auspices of the RHDCs for Reproductive and Sexual Health and for Nursing and Midwifery. The meeting brought together policymakers, health professionals, and regional stakeholders, underscoring the central role of nurses and midwives in delivering safe, accessible, and high-quality services, particularly in maternal and neonatal care.

The Romanian Order of Nurses, Midwives, and Medical Assistants (OAMGMAMR), as coordinator of the RHDC for Nursing and Midwifery, was commended for its leadership and contribution to advancing excellence in health education, practice, and policy. This collaboration highlighted Romania’s and SEEHN’s shared dedication to building resilient and equitable health systems.

Major milestone was announced: on 21 May 2025, during the 78th World Health Assembly in Geneva, SEEHN co-hosting a side event with the Romanian Ministry of Health, OAMGMAMR, and partners from Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, and Jordan. The event to be focused on empowering nurses and midwives to strengthen people-centered health systems and showcasing South Eastern Europe’s contributions to global health debates.

Through these activities, SEEHN continued to position the RHDCs as platforms for cooperation, solidarity, and sustainable development, reinforcing the professions of nursing and midwifery as cornerstones of resilient health systems across the region.

6.2.7 Resuming Activities with Regional Health Development Centre on Mental Health BIH

The SEEHN Regional Health Development Center on Mental Health (RHDC on MH), hosted by Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, has resumed its activities. The Center continues its mission to strengthen mental health systems in the region and, in line with this, intends to renew collaboration and contacts with all SEEHN member countries. We would like to take this opportunity and inform you that Ms. Lejla Krvavac is newly appointed Coordinator of the RHDC on MH. In addition, a technical meeting is planned with NFPs on MH to be held in Sarajevo in 2026.

In order to ensure the RHDCs’ work is both sustainable and regionally impactful, with integrated technical and financial support, the RHDCs were recently asked to submit Biannual plans detailing their operations, finances, and challenges. The Secretariat is now holding technical meetings with each centre to assess needs and opportunities.

7. Cooperation with partners

In 2025, the SEEHN Secretariat maintained its commitment to fostering strong partnerships with partner organizations and Member Countries, albeit at a slower pace due to transitional adjustments and evolving priorities. Regular information exchange and efforts to strengthen existing collaborations remained a focus, with valuable discussions exploring new partnership opportunities among public health experts, NGOs, and government representatives. These efforts underscored SEEHN's unique role in facilitating dialogue and negotiation to align diverse interests for the collective benefit of regional public health.

7.1 Central European Initiative (CEI)

The 3-day *Workshop “Healthy and active ageing in the South-eastern Europe Health Network Member States - WBs and beyond: challenges, progress and potential policies through economic lens”* convened policymakers, experts from South-eastern Europe Health Network Member States (SEEHN MSs) and partner countries, alongside the representatives from World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO/EURO) and Central European Initiative (CEI) whose Cooperation Fund co-financed (at 34%) the event, in Bar, Montenegro, on 17-19th September. Policymakers, experts, and stakeholders shared national experiences, aligned strategies, and strengthened policy responses to demographic change. There were few cross-cutting messages that emerged throughout the event: a) Evidence-based policymaking drives smart investment for sustainable ageing, as exemplified by the use of demographic trends, PASH analysis, and country experiences, b) Societal equity and the dignity of older people must be central to ageing policy, with special emphasis on protecting vulnerable groups and empowering active citizenship and c) Regional cooperation was recognized as a primary asset, enabling countries to pool knowledge, create training opportunities, facilitate mutual learning, and elevate the collective voice. Furthermore, the workshop yielded an initial set of regional priorities that thoughtfully interweave immediate actions such as prevention, health promotion, and workforce development, with forward-looking reforms in financing, governance, and models of community-based care.

Recommendations from the Workshop are to:

- Reframe ageing as a whole-of-society issue involving not just health, but also finance, social welfare, and community participation,
- Invest in prevention across the life course to reduce the long-term burden on health and social care systems,
- Strengthen primary and long-term care systems as fundamental pillars for sustainable health systems, ensuring that services are accessible, affordable, and high quality for elderly,
- Improve age-disaggregated data collection and invest in research to monitor progress, inform equitable policymaking, and ensure responsive, adaptive programming and
- SEEHN Secretariat to continue to promote regional cooperation and knowledge exchange, facilitate joint training, technical exchange, and strategic advocacy and to support Member States in accessing and coordinating funding instruments.

These priorities will inform the development of a regional roadmap for action, which will feed directly into the WHO European Strategy on Ageing (2026–2030), affirming SEEHN’s role as a proactive regional partner in advancing the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing.

The workshop underscored SEEHN’s distinctive role in fostering connectivity across countries, across sectors and between regional and global processes.

7.2 Direct Relief

The SEEHN Secretariat, represented by Dr. Tatiana Paduraru, met with Direct Relief’s Ms. Alexandra Kelleher and Ms. Katerina Takovska to explore regional collaboration. Discussions focused on health system resilience, emergency preparedness, digital health, financing for aging populations, and support for countries hosting Ukrainian refugees. Romania and the Republic of Moldova were invited to negotiate targeted healthcare support for refugees, with potential funding of several million dollars depending on project design and capacity.

A key achievement was the approval of the project “Strengthening Operational Capacities of the SEEHN Secretariat and Supporting a Regional Consultative Process for the 6th Ministerial Health Declaration” (USD 65,000, Feb 2026–Dec 2027). This project aims at strengthening the operational capacity of the SEEHN Secretariat through targeted meetings, development of standardized operating procedures, and expert facilitation, while supporting a regional consultative process to draft the Ministerial Pledge and four-year Strategic Action Plan.

7.3 European Commission (EC)

Cooperation with European Commission (EC) continued during 2025. The Secretariat is under continuous expectation and coordination for project proposals concept notes eligible for EC Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Tool (TAIEX) Instrument.

7.4 European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG)

SEEHN and the European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG) collaborated in 2025 to enable SEEHN representatives to attend the EHFG Annual Conference, themed "*Rethinking Solidarity in Health: Healing Europe’s Fractured Social Contract.*" This collaboration ensured that perspectives from South Eastern Europe were integrated into broader European health debates, reinforcing SEEHN’s role as a bridge between regional priorities and continental health policy. This partnership, funded by the SEEHN Secretariat and supported by EHFG, facilitated the participation of key policymakers from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Moldova, who also engaged in a pre-conference workshop on "*Global Health Diplomacy,*" thereby strengthening SEEHN's capacity-building and engagement in European health policy.

7.5 EuroHealthNet

SEEHN's leading representatives participated in EuroHealthNet General Council Meeting (GCM) 2025. SEEHN was represented by Dr. Tatiana Paduraru, SEEHN Secretariat Director, and Dr. Svetlana Nicolaescu, Chair of the SEEHN Executive Committee and State Secretary at the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Moldova, at the EuroHealthNet General Council Meeting and Annual Seminar held in Brussels from 11 – 13th June 2025. This high-level, three-day event convened health leaders, policymakers, and public health experts from across Europe to explore joint strategies for addressing the interconnected challenges of climate change, health promotion, and health equity. It provided a vital forum for knowledge exchange, policy alignment, and collaborative planning to advance a healthier and more equitable Europe. Dr. Paduraru and Dr. Nicolaescu actively contributed to strategic discussions on the evolving role of public health in climate action, the development of EuroHealthNet's Strategic Development Plan 2026–2031, and the adoption of a new Ethical Framework for Health Promotion. Their participation reaffirmed SEEHN's commitment to strengthening regional cooperation and public health leadership in the face of global health challenges. A central feature of the programme was the Annual Seminar on "*Climate Change and Health: Using the Health Argument to Mitigate and Adapt*", hosted by the Spanish Permanent Representation to the EU. The seminar highlighted the growing health impacts of climate change, particularly for vulnerable populations and underscored the urgent need for health-informed climate action. The sessions examined evidence-based approaches to:

- Address the increasing health and health equity impacts of climate change;
- Foster intersectoral collaboration to tackle environmental health determinants;
- Equip public health leaders with tools for climate adaptation and resilience;
- Align regional and national strategies with European and global policy frameworks.

The EuroHealthNet GCM 2025 reaffirmed the importance of coordinated European responses to health inequalities and climate threats. SEEHN commends EuroHealthNet for organizing a forward-looking and impactful meeting and looks forward to continued collaboration in shaping resilient and equitable health systems across the region.

EuroHealthNet represented by Ms. Gabriella Sutton, Project Coordinator, participated in the 48th SEEHN Plenary Meeting with the active involvement during the *session on Collaboration and new avenues for partnerships* who outlined the organization's strategic efforts to embed health promotion in school environments across Europe. She introduced the EU-funded Schools for Health initiative, supporting schools in implementing best practices in mental health, physical activity, and nutrition, framed within the WHO-defined Health Promoting Schools approach.

Drawing on lessons from Romania, Ms. Sutton emphasized the importance of policy alignment, stakeholder engagement, and capacity-building, including translation of materials and workshops with local institutions.

7.6 European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)

In 2025, the SEEHN Secretariat initiated the development of an application for a TAIEX workshop on radon exposure and lung cancer, in close collaboration with the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA). This effort reflects SEEHN's commitment to addressing pressing public health challenges through evidence-based dialogue and capacity building. By engaging with EPHA and leveraging the TAIEX instrument, the Secretariat aims to strengthen regional expertise, foster knowledge exchange, and support Member States in advancing preventive measures against radon-related health risks.

7.7 Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)

SEEHN has been engaging with RCC throughout the reporting year frame. In 2025, SEEHN strengthened collaboration with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) through a dedicated session on health workforce mobility, delivered by Ms. Ulpiana Lama. RCC presented its human-centred development approach, integrating health, education, and employment, with a focus on advancing workforce mobility and rights portability in the Western Balkans. While current efforts target six economies, the Southeast Europe 2030 Strategy encompasses all 13 SEECP members.

Key initiatives include two regional agreements on the recognition of professional qualifications, covering doctors, dentists, architects, nurses, midwives, pharmacists, and veterinary surgeons, aligned with EU Directive 2005/36/EC to facilitate automatic recognition and mobility. Ms. Lama emphasized the importance of inter-ministerial coordination and urged SEEHN Member States to assess the impact of these agreements on national health systems. Several Member State representatives expressed strong interest in joining RCC's initiatives, particularly to align with EU legislation and harmonization efforts in preparation for EU accession.

In December, a virtual meeting was held between the Head of the SEEHN Secretariat and Ms. Lama, focusing on further strengthening cooperation in the areas of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and human capital development. The discussion also explored opportunities for the enhanced engagement of the Regional Cooperation Council in the preparation and organisation of the 2027 SEEHN Ministerial Forum. This exchange reaffirmed the shared commitment to deepening regional collaboration and advancing joint efforts aimed at improving health outcomes and promoting the well-being of populations across the South-Eastern Europe region.

7.8 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

SEEHN Secretariat participated in the Annual Forum of the Regional Alliance for Cervical Cancer Prevention in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, highlighting that cervical cancer remains a significant cause of mortality in South-Eastern Europe due to insufficient HPV vaccination, screening, and treatment access. Dr. Paduraru of SEEHN emphasized the network's 23-year history of intergovernmental health cooperation across nine Member States and the crucial role of its Regional Health Development Centers in advancing prevention, policy, and capacity building. Key recommendations from SEEHN included enhancing HPV vaccination, expanding organized screening with digital registries, ensuring equitable access to diagnostics and treatment, securing

sustainable financing through partnerships, and building trust by addressing stigma related to sexual and reproductive health.

7.9 WHO Regional Office for Europe

7.9.1 WHO Europe Workshop on Health Workforce

In March 2025, SEEHN participated in the regional online workshop “Unlocking the Power of Data and Human Resources for Health Information Systems to Support Health and Care Workforce Development in the WHO European Region”, convened by WHO Europe. The high-level event focused on strengthening the quality and use of health workforce data across the region.

Representing SEEHN, Ms. Roxana Hainagiu, Head of International Relations Department of the SEEHN Regional Health Development Centre on Nursing and Midwifery, contributed to the session on National Health Workforce Accounts: Data Collection and Reporting. She presented outcomes from the SEEHN sub-regional workshop held in Bucharest in August 2024, emphasizing the RHDC’s role in fostering knowledge exchange, building capacity, and improving data quality in nursing and midwifery.

The discussions highlighted persistent challenges such as inconsistent indicator frameworks, limited digital infrastructure, and weak inter-ministerial coordination. With WHO support, countries achieved a 26% increase in submitted nursing workforce data within four months, including 37 previously unreported indicators. These advances demonstrate tangible progress in workforce stock, distribution, education, and financing. SEEHN reaffirmed its commitment to leveraging the RHDC as a driver of collaboration and regional capacity building, helping countries close data gaps, align with global frameworks, and strengthen evidence-based workforce planning. The workshop marked a milestone in implementing the EUR/RC73/8 Framework for Action and reinforced SEEHN’s role in advancing resilient health systems through structured regional cooperation.

7.9.2 78th World Health Assembly

SEEHN was represented at the **78th World Health Assembly** in Geneva (May 20–23, 2025) by the Presidency Bulgaria. The Secretariat contributed to discussions and side events, including a focus on regional nursing leadership. This participation reinforced SEEHN’s role as a regional voice in global health governance and its dedication to advancing solidarity and resilience in South Eastern Europe. SEEHN actively participated in a **high-level side event at the 78th World Health Assembly**, titled *“Nursing and Midwifery Leadership: Driving Global Health Goals,”* emphasizing the critical role of nursing and midwifery leadership in transforming health systems across the region. Co-hosted by the Romanian Ministry of Health and the Romanian Order of Nurses, and co-sponsored by several nations and SEEHN itself, the event served as a vital platform for global and regional leaders to exchange strategies for strengthening the nursing and midwifery workforce. During the event, the acting Director of the SEEHN Secretariat highlighted the necessity of empowering nursing and midwifery professionals to enhance health systems and achieve health, dignity, and equity, while acknowledging both regional disparities and progress made through initiatives like the WHO Collaborating Centre in Israel and a Regional Health Development Centre in Romania. Following this, SEEHN co-sponsored

Romania's statement in Committee B of WHA78, advocating for the extension of the Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery through 2030, thereby reinforcing its commitment to sustained investment in nursing and midwifery leadership as crucial for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 3 and universal health coverage.

7.9.3 75th WHO Regional Committee for Europe

Under Israel's Presidency, SEEHN actively participated in the **75th WHO Regional Committee for Europe session in Copenhagen, held from 28 to 31 October 2025**. SEEHN used the opportunity to advocate for resilient health systems built on solidarity, innovation, and collaboration among its Member States. SEEHN expressed strong support for the Second European Programme of Work 2026–2030, emphasizing its focus on health security, climate change, noncommunicable diseases, and ageing, while highlighting regional advancements in emergency preparedness, workforce strengthening, and healthy ageing. The network also underscored the importance of evidence-based policy, equity, and regional cooperation in addressing the challenges of an aging population, and reaffirmed its commitment to improving maternal, newborn, and adolescent health through stronger systems and digital innovation. The Secretariat highlighted regional priorities, including innovation, resilience, and equity, while also meeting with the WHO EURO Regional Director to advance strategic collaboration. This engagement reinforced SEEHN's growing influence in European health governance.

On the sidelines of the 75th Regional Committee, the Head of the Secretariat met with Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe. The two leaders reaffirmed the enduring partnership between SEEHN and WHO/Europe and discussed ways further to strengthen both technical and political collaboration across South-Eastern Europe. They underscored the strong alignment between SEEHN's mandate and the WHO European Programme of Work, particularly in key priority areas such as noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), digital health, health workforce development, aging, health financing, and strengthening primary health care.

7.10 Partner countries

Cooperation with partner countries remains a cornerstone of SEEHN's work, ensuring that the Network benefits from diverse expertise and strengthened regional ties. Partner countries such as Slovenia and Croatia actively contribute to SEEHN activities, participating in plenary sessions, technical meetings, and collaborative initiatives that support the Secretariat and its Member States. Their engagement reinforces the Network's capacity to address shared public health priorities, fosters knowledge exchange, and enhances the collective impact of SEEHN across South Eastern Europe.

7.10.1 Slovenia

In September 2025, Head of Secretariat had an online meeting with counterparts from Slovenian Ministry of Health to explore opportunities for bilateral cooperation with Slovenia in 2026 and beyond. Confirming Slovenia's commitment to support and organize joint SEEHN activities, the parties discussed hosting an event in Slovenia during the second half of 2026 on previously agreed

subject of interest. Additionally, they agreed to utilize the TAIEX instrument for a multi-country workshop on organ transplantation and donor programs involving Slovenian and Croatian experts, while exploring and elaborating a framework for long-term collaborative projects.

8. FUNDRAISING

8.1 HORIZON CALLs Proposals

In 2025, SEEHN Secretariat actively engaged in consortium building for Horizon Europe calls, joining two distinct proposal initiatives. The first focuses on strengthening regional responses to non-communicable diseases (NCDs), aiming to enhance prevention, management, and policy alignment across member states. The second, currently under development, addresses mental health and youth, with emphasis on resilience, early intervention, and cross-sectoral collaboration. These initiatives reflect SEEHN's commitment to mobilizing external resources, expanding regional collaboration, and ensuring that innovative, evidence-based projects support the health priorities of member states.

8.2 Direct Relief Collaboration

Director of the South Eastern Europe Health Network Secretariat, met with Ms. Alexandra Kelleher, Senior Program Manager for Europe and Middle East Emergency Response, and Ms. Katerina Takovska, Regional Director for Europe and MENA, Managing Director of Direct Relief GmbH, Skopje, on 26 September 2025.

Discussions focused on potential avenues for collaboration, such as rapid support in emergencies, cross-border supply chain readiness, rehabilitation and mental health initiatives, and energy resilience for health facilities. Discussions also focused on potential support to the neighboring countries to the Ukrainian conflict and who host refugees for more comprehensive support.

Both parties emphasized the importance of reinforcing cooperation and committed to further exploring opportunities for joint action to advance public health initiatives of regional relevance.

The collaboration materialized in a support of Direct Relief toward the SEEHN Secretariat of around 50,000 EURO. The support is aimed to target and strengthen directly the SEEHN Secretariat operational capacity and the strategic planning and implementation of regional SEE plan of action for the period 2027-2032.

Additional discussions were held to strengthen the neighboring countries (Romania and Republic of Moldova) in their coping capacity with the near conflict area and the Ukrainian refugees.

9. CONCLUSIONS & WAYS FORWARD

The SEEHN Secretariat has successfully navigated a transformative year, marked by transitions, challenges, and achievements. Substantial progress was made in advancing regional collaboration, strengthening partnerships, and addressing critical public health priorities.

The findings presented in this report reaffirm the strategic importance of the SEEHN as a trusted platform for regional cooperation, policy dialogue, and knowledge exchange. The progress achieved across Member States reflects a sustained commitment to strengthening health systems and addressing shared challenges, particularly in areas such as noncommunicable diseases, health workforce development, and system resilience. At the same time, the analysis highlights persistent gaps in implementation, variations in capacity, and the need for more structured follow-up to ensure that regional commitments translate into tangible national results.

Building on these findings, a number of priority directions emerge. First, there is a need to strengthen the implementation dimension of SEEHN activities by linking regional initiatives more closely with national reform processes, including through clearer deliverables, timelines, and monitoring mechanisms. Second, enhancing regional cooperation in key areas—such as primary health care, digital health, workforce mobility, and emergency preparedness—will be essential to address common challenges in a coordinated and resource-efficient manner. Third, continued efforts are required to reinforce partnerships with European Union institutions, regional organizations, and development partners, in order to mobilize technical and financial support aligned with SEEHN priorities.

In this context, the forthcoming period provides a critical window of opportunity to consolidate achievements and advance a more results-oriented SEEHN agenda. Preparations for the next SEEHN Ministerial Forum will be instrumental in defining strategic priorities for the coming cycle, including the development of a renewed SEEHN Pledge and Action Plan. This process should be inclusive, evidence-informed, and aligned with broader European health policy frameworks, ensuring relevance to both EU Member States and those in the accession process.

Concretely, the following next steps are proposed: (i) operationalisation of priority areas through targeted regional initiatives and capacity-building activities; (ii) development of a strengthened monitoring and reporting framework to track progress across Member States; (iii) facilitation of thematic policy dialogues and peer-learning platforms; and (iv) enhanced visibility and communication of SEEHN achievements and impact. The SEEHN Secretariat remains fully committed to supporting Member States in advancing this agenda, fostering regional solidarity, and contributing to improved health outcomes and well-being across South-Eastern Europe.