

**Annex to WHO European Healthy Cities national network accreditation letter**

**Israel – application for Phase VII accreditation**

<i>National network</i>	Israel Healthy Cities Network		
<i>Date of application</i>	24 October 2020	<i>National network coordinator</i>	Milka Donchin

**The Israel Healthy Cities Network is recommended for accreditation in Phase VII (2019–2025).**

### **1. Summary of application**

The Israel Healthy Cities Network presents an excellent application for Phase VII of the WHO European Healthy Cities Programme. The application shows clear alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals and how these are used at the national level. Excellent reflection by the Network on the three goals and six themes of Phase VII of the WHO European Healthy Cities Programme is evident throughout the application.

The application reflects the strong conceptualization of the national network in Israel. The Network strongly emphasizes capacity-building at the city level. The role of the Network is to be a platform for implementing the policy and strategic goals of three organizations: Israel’s Ministry of Health, the Federation of Local Authorities in Israel and WHO. The Network is managed as a unit within the framework of the Federation of Local Authorities in Israel, a nongovernmental organization. From this standpoint, as an example of good practice, the application highlights the training course the Network jointly coordinated with the Ministry of Health for all new and potential city coordinators. This course comprises many modes of delivery, including lectures, workshops and field visits, and is designed to address the needs of city coordinators without previous health promotion or public health experience. The course also incorporates presentations from relevant organizations, civil society and other ministerial departments, including the Ministry for Social Equity and Ministry of Education. This intersectoral approach is an important way the Network works to ensure that coordinators are aware of how health interacts with other sectors and to work towards the representation of health in all policies.

The emphasis on capacity-building is also evident through the multiple learning meetings that occur throughout the year, which contribute to the professional capacity of city coordinators and the community capacity of the Network. The specific content and aims of these meetings are tailored to the

needs to the Network and the city coordinators, but the themes of health in all policies, a life-course approach and equity are incorporated into the topics that are presented. Further, the Network provides a professional team to support cities in preparing their city health profile. This process is then followed by discussions with the mayor, city councillors, heads of municipal departments and public representatives. The Network is encouraging more cities to undergo this systematic process and also focuses on the strategic planning in cities to assist them to achieve their own identified goals in addition to the Sustainable Development Goals.

The application clearly shows that the Network is concerned with inequality, in various forms, within Israel, and how to work to address this. As part of their advocacy efforts, the Network has been negotiating with the Ministry of Health to make mandatory the role of the city coordinator within the municipal administration. The Network recognizes that this action will enable municipalities of low socioeconomic status to employ someone in this role. In the strategic plan for the Network (2020–2024), the Network has developed specific goals for municipalities to develop a database that will enable them to map the municipal inequalities and then use this as a basis for addressing these.

This application, submitted during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrates the approach to reflective practice that is evident in the Network. During the crisis, the Network placed higher priority on increasing resilience at the city and Network level. The Network recognizes the importance of resilience in supporting citizens' sense of community, preventing violence and promoting good mental health. In the face of the pandemic, the Network has developed a programme of resilience promotion in cities, which it has highlighted as a priority action for Phase VII.

The Network is also in the process of developing a list of indicators by which the cities can then be ranked over several dimensions of implementing the Healthy Cities principles. This will enable cities to map their progress over time and compare their progress with peers. Importantly, the Network has recognized the need for diverse indicators to capture the determinants of health and plans to include indicators on healthy urban planning, recycling and resilience.

Commitment to active participation and intersectoral collaboration is evident in the Network's identification of round-tables as an area of good practice. Working in a round-table, the Network works alongside representatives from ministries, health-care services, other relevant services, nongovernmental organizations and the city coordinators to develop thematic manuals for the city coordinators and other relevant professionals. The collaborative approach is reflected in the initial negotiation of a common language between partners, mutual learning on topics and active contributions from all partners to the discussion and writing process. These manuals include national and local cases for action, a systems-based approach, detailed examples and chapters indicating what people can do to promote health at the personal level and practically what ministries and nongovernmental organizations can do. This ensures that the information shared in these manuals has a wide reach.

## **2. Phase VII areas of action and collaboration**

**The Network presented interesting priority areas for action in the application that WHO would like to support by suggesting the following collaborations.**

- In describing priority areas for action, the Network presents a comprehensive plan for developing Healthy Cities indicators, to enable the ranking of cities by the implementation of the Healthy Cities principles and strategies. WHO also encourages the Network to share its finalized indicators with other national networks that may be interested in developing similar monitoring and evaluating processes for member cities.
- The Network presents a plan to foster reliance, as a process by which people and systems improve their capacity for successful adaptation in the face of adversity and develop a manual on resilience promotion in the cities. Although events such as the COVID-19 pandemic can potentially affect all people in Israel, vulnerable groups, including those experiencing discrimination and those with lower socioeconomic status, are often disproportionately affected. It is therefore important that the Network explicitly consider vulnerable groups in their planning for resilience promotion. This could be achieved by community engagement of vulnerable groups in the planning process but may also be achieved by other methods. WHO recommends that the Network develop a plan for understanding the challenges faced by vulnerable communities in promoting resilience by the middle of Phase VII in 2022. To support this, WHO will connect the Network with a peer national network that can share its good practice in addressing inequalities for vulnerable communities in its programmes or activities and/or provide technical support on addressing inequalities as a Phase VII priority.