World Health Organization
European Region

REGIONS FOR HEALTH NETWORK

REGION OF WESTERN GREECE
full of contrast!

Bridging knowledge and action: Regions shaping the future of health

31st RHN Annual Meeting
Patras, Greece, 24-27 November 2026

Provisional Programme



PROVISIONAL PROGRAM

Organized by the Western Greece Region in collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for Europe, European Office for Investment for Health and Development, Venice, Italy.

The 31st Annual Meeting of the WHO Regions for Health Network (RHN) will convene regional and subnational authorities, WHO representatives and key partners to reinforce cooperation and advance common public health priorities across the WHO European Region. The meeting will offer regional leaders, policy-makers, experts and practitioners an opportunity to exchange knowledge and experience, share evidence and explore practical and innovative responses to current and emerging public health challenges. Through policy dialogue and peer learning, participants will reflect on progress in strengthening health governance at regional and local levels, consider shared challenges and identify ways to accelerate action for health and well-being.

PLACE: Hosted by the Government of Western Greece in Patras, the meeting will focus on the contribution of regions to shaping health policy and improving population well-being in the face of a rapidly evolving global landscape. The RHN is grateful to the Government of Western Greece for its generous hospitality and commitment to bringing the Network together and for creating an opportunity to experience the region's initiatives, achievements and local perspectives firsthand.

INTEGRATED APPROACHES TO HEALTH: Building on the Healthy Settings approach, and drawing on the experiences and principles of Healthy Cities initiatives and the One Health approach, the meeting will contribute to strengthening an integrated and systems-oriented perspective on public health. It will provide an opportunity to reflect on how health and well-being are shaped by the interplay of environmental, social and economic determinants, and to consider how more coordinated, cross-sectoral and context-sensitive action can help address these interconnections.

TOPICS ADDRESSED: The agenda will take an integrated, forward-looking approach to advancing population health, tackling the social, environmental and economic determinants of health, and reducing inequalities across communities and generations. It will explore how healthier, more inclusive and sustainable places can be shaped through action on climate change, the environment and One Health; how health and well-being systems can respond to demographic change, healthy ageing and the growing importance of mental health and psychosocial well-being; and how investment in health workforce capacity, public trust, effective communication and health literacy can strengthen resilience. Particular emphasis will be placed on cross-sectoral and cross-border collaboration beyond traditional health care settings, as well as on harnessing digital innovation and digital health literacy to support smarter, healthier and more connected regions, while ensuring that the needs and perspectives of young people and future generations are central to shaping health policy and action.

SITE VISITS: The site visits will complement the discussions, spotlighting public health initiatives led by the Government of Western Greece and offering firsthand insights into local practices.

Day 1: Tuesday

24 November 2026

12:15 – 13:15	**Arrival and registration**
13:15 –13:30	**Introduction and pre-opening of the event** • **Anna Mastorakou**, Deputy Regional Governor for Public Health, Region of Western Greece • **Kira Fortune**, WHO, Senior Adviser and RHN Coordinator
13.30 –15.00	**Digital Transformation and Data for Public Health** ***Kira Fortune**, WHO, Senior Adviser and RHN Coordinator, European Office for Investment for Health and Development, Venice* *This session will examine how digital transformation, data and AI can strengthen public health and enable smarter regional decision-making, while highlighting opportunities and challenges for implementation.* • **George Dafoulas**, Digital Health Advisor, Office of Minister of Digital Governance, Greece • **Lenio Capsaskis**, WHO Country Office in Greece (WHO Athens Office) • **Chrysostomos Stylios**, Director of the Industrial Systems Institute, Athena Research Center, and Professor at the Department of Informatics and Telecommunications, University of Ioannina, Greece, AI Care Interreg • **Elena Berti**, Head, the Health Innovation Unit, Research and Innovation in Health and Social Services Department, Bologna, Emilia-Romagna, Italy • **Martina Marcassa**, Project Officer, ProMIS, International Health Programme, Italy • **Franciso J Sánchez Laguna**, Coordinator of the Andalusian Digital Health Strategy, Andalusian Health Service (Servicio Andaluz de Salud), Regional Ministry of Health, Government of Andalusia, Seville, Spain.
15.00 – 15.30	**Coffee break**
15:30 – 17.15	**Healthy Places & Urban Health** ***Dasy Papathanasopoulou**, National Coordinator of WHO-Hellenic Healthy Cities Network, Greece* *This session will explore how local governance can shape healthier and more liveable communities, and how regions and local authorities can work together to this effect. In addition, the draft Memorandum of Understanding between the Healthy Cities Network and the Regions for Health Network will be presented.*



Speakers:

- **Anna Mastorakou**, Deputy Regional Governor for Public Health, Region of Western Greece
- **Paola Angelini**, Environment and Health, Collective Prevention and Public Health Sector, Directorate-General for Personal Care, Health and Welfare, Emilia-Romagna Region, Bologna, Italy
- **Federico Peter**, Head of the Health Promotion and Evaluation Service, Department of Health and Social Affairs, Canton of Ticino, Bellinzona, Switzerland
- **Aleksandra Čavić**, Associate Professor and Senior Adviser, Head of the Department of Public Health, Provincial Secretariat for Health, Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Novi Sad, Serbia
- **Petra Marinko**, Architect, Founder of Non Tox Uni Kum and Non Tox Hub, Ljubljana, Slovenia and a New European Bauhaus Advisor
- **Liesbeth Van Holten**, Public Entrepreneur – Strategy and Networking, Province of Utrecht, Utrecht, Kingdom of the Netherlands
- **Nuri Hesselink**, Policy Advisor Healthy Living Environment, Province of Utrecht, Utrecht (*Healthy Places à la Carte: Shared Frameworks for Place-Based Decisions*)

17.15 – 18:00	**Break**
18.00 – 18:30	**Bus from My Way Hotel to the University of Patras Conference Centre**, including a stop at the bridge for the torch ceremony marking the official opening of the event.

18.30 – 19:30	**Group photo at the bridge** **Welcome of the Torchbearers** **Presentation of the Charilaos Trikoupis Bridge** **University of Patras Conference Centre**
19.30 – 21:00	**Official opening and welcome address: the first greeting will be delivered by the Deputy Minister of Culture of Greece, Mr. Iason Fotilas** **Moderator: *Milena Oikonomou*** and ***Lazar Nikolic***, WHO European Office for Investment for Health and Development, Venice *This session will help frame the objectives of the meeting within the broader priorities for health and well-being in the Western Greece Region, setting the scene for the discussions and exchanges that will follow.* *Presentation of the Hippocrates organization.* **Speakers:** • **Mr Iasonas Fotilas**, Deputy Minister of Culture, Responsible for Contemporary Culture, Greece. • **Koulouri Foteini**, Head of the General Directorate of Public Health and Quality of life, Ministry of Health, Athens, Greece • ***Video presentation of the Western Greece Region*** • **Nektarios Farmakis**, Regional Governor of Western Greece, Region of Western Greece, Patras, Greece • **Anna Mastorakou**, Deputy Regional Governor for Public Health, Region of Western Greece • **David T. Dyjack**, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer, National Environmental Health Association (NEHA), Denver, Colorado, United States of America • **Gundo Weiler**, Head, WHO Athens Quality of Care and Patient Safety Office & Special Representative to Greece, World Health Organization (***PRE-RECORDED***) • **Natasha Azzopardi – Muscat**, Director of the Division of Health Systems, WHO Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen, Denmark (***PRE-RECORDED***) • **Kira Fortune**, WHO, Senior Adviser and RHN Coordinator, European Office for Investment for Health and Development, Venice • ***Ancient Greek Ritual***
21.00 – 22.30	**Group photo followed by buffet dinner**
22:30	**Return by bus to the hotel**

Day 2: Wednesday

25 November 2026

08:30 – 09:00	**Arrival and morning coffee**
09:00 – 09:15	**Recap of the previous day and key messages** • **Anna Mastorakou**, Deputy Regional Governor for Public Health, Region of Western Greece
09.15 – 10.30	**One Health and climate change** ***Bettina Menne***, Former Senior Adviser, European Office for Investment for Health and Development, Venice *This session will explore how regions can integrate One Health approaches into regional policy, connecting human health, environmental sustainability and ecosystem health, while examining the role of data and monitoring tools and the practical challenges of implementation.* • **Simona Seravesi**, Technical Officer (One Health), WHO, Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen, Denmark (***ONLINE***) • **David T. Dyjack**, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer, National Environmental Health Association (NEHA), Denver, Colorado, United States of America • **Spiros Mourelatos**, Biologist, President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Ecodevelopment S.A., Thessaloniki, Greece • **Paola Angelini**, Environment and Health Officer, Collective Prevention and Public Health Sector, Directorate-General for Personal Care, Health and Welfare, Emilia-Romagna Region, Bologna, Italy • **Bruna Raquel Ornelas de Gouveia**, Regional Director of Health, Regional Health Directorate, Autonomous Region of Madeira, Funchal, Portugal (***ONLINE***) • **Akinosoglou Karolina**, Internist and Infectious Diseases Specialist, Professor of Internal Medicine, Department of Internal Medicine, School of Medicine, University of Patras, Rio, Patras, Greece • **Michail Samouris**, Researcher, Department's Applied Physics, Laboratory of Atmospheric Physics, Department of Physics, University of Patras (Climate Monitoring and Early Warning for Healthier, More Resilient Regions) • **Per Rosander**, Regional Development Officer for Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals, Västra Götaland Region, Gothenburg, Sweden (*Resistant bacteria are favoured in hospital sewers – The need for tailored measures*) (***ONLINE***)
10.30 – 11.00	**Coffee break – Discover, Connect & Get Inspired: RHN Poster Exhibition**

11.00 – 12.15 **Policy Dialogue on Turning Regional Priorities into Local Action for Healthy Ageing**

Kira Fortune, WHO, Senior Adviser and RHN Coordinator, European Office for Investment for Health and Development, Venice

Political representatives:

- **Fotini Koulouri**, Director General of Public Health and Quality of Life, Ministry of Health of Greece
- **Anna Mastorakou**, Deputy Regional Governor for Public Health, Region of Western Greece
- **Amaia Antxustegi Ziarda**, Councilor for Social Action, Provincial Council of Biscay, Bilbao
- **Maria (Mary) Kouri**, Regional Councillor, Political Representative of the Region of Attia in RHN, Athens
- **Peter Sögaard**, Regional Commissioner and Member of the Regional Council (Regionfullmäktige), Västra Götaland Region, Sweden (***PRE-RECORDED***)
- **Massimo Fabi**, Regional Councillor, Health, Emilia-Romagna Region, Italy (***PRE-RECORDED***)

Policy and technical experts:

- **Has Bakker**, Regional Minister for the Province of Utrecht (***PRE-RECORDED***)
- **Nadia Vimercati**, Regional WHP Network Coordinator, ATS Città Metropolitana, Milano, Lombardy Region (TBC)

Academia:

- **Cory Neudorf**, Professor, Department of Community Health and Epidemiology, College of Medicine, University of Saskatchewan; President of the Urban Public Health Network of Canada, Canada.

12.15 – 13.15 **Lunch**

13.15 – 14.30 **Mental Health & Community Wellbeing**

Elisabeth Bengtsson, Consultant, WHO European Office for Investment for Health and Development, Venice

This session will explore how regional policies and initiatives can strengthen community resilience, reduce inequalities and harness the contribution of public health, social services, cultural participation and community engagement to improve quality of life.

- **Gundo Weiler**, Head, WHO Athens Quality of Care and Patient Safety Office & Special Representative to Greece, World Health Organization
- **Athanasios (Thanos) E. Askitis**, Deputy Regional Governor for Health, Region of Attica, Greece
- **Chrousos Georgios**, Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics and Endocrinology, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA), Greece; UNESCO Chair on Adolescent Health Care (***ONLINE***)
- **Panagiotis (Panos) Alexopoulos**, Professor of Psychiatry-Psychogeriatrics, Department of Psychiatry, School of Medicine, University of Patras,
- **Nikos Stefanis**, Professor of Psychiatry, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA), Athens, Greece
- **Alessandro Cassini**, Professor, Cantonal Medical Officer, Canton of Geneva, Switzerland
- **Afsaneh Nejat**, Policy & Practice Officer, EuroHealthNet, Brussels, Belgium

14.30 – 16.00	**Interactive Session: Regional Practices and RHN sub-groups** **Moderator: *Liesbeth Van Holten***, Public Entrepreneur, Strategy and Networking, Province of Utrecht, Utrecht, Kingdom of the Netherlands *In recent years, RHN members and partners have worked across several areas. Four themes have been selected for focused discussion: cross-border cooperation, climate change and health, the Well-Being Economy, and using data to analyse health and social outcomes across clusters. These reflect shared regional challenges and offer a chance to connect expertise, identify common needs and develop approaches suited to different territorial contexts.* *The session will help members organise around these themes, identify common interests and define realistic activities for the coming year.* 1. ***Health Regions Peer Group initiative*, Stijn Michielse, Researcher**, Epidemiologist, GGD Zuid-Limburg (South Limburg Public Health Service), Maastricht, the Netherlands / Cory Neudorf, Professor, Department of Community Health and Epidemiology, College of Medicine, University of Saskatchewan; President of the Urban Public Health Network of Canada, Canada 2. ***Well-Being Economy working group***, TBC 3. ***Cross-border cooperation*, Stijn Michielse**, Researcher, Epidemiologist, GGD Zuid-Limburg (South Limburg Public Health Service), Maastricht, the Netherlands / **Florian Lochner**, Programme Manager, EU Agenda / Healthacross, Directorate for Medicine and Nursing, Lower Austria, St. Pölten, Austria 4. ***Climate change and health in regions*, Marie-Laure Robberechts**, Policy Officer, International Policy Team, Department of Care, Government of Flanders, Flanders, Brussels, Belgium
16.00 – 17.45	**Free time: NETWORKING**
17.45	**Cultural Tour of Patras** *Indicative stops include the Roman Odeon, Cathedral of Saint Andrew, and the Stairs of Agios Nikolaos, with a short photo stop along the way.*
20.00	**Return to the hotel** **Free evening: Networking**

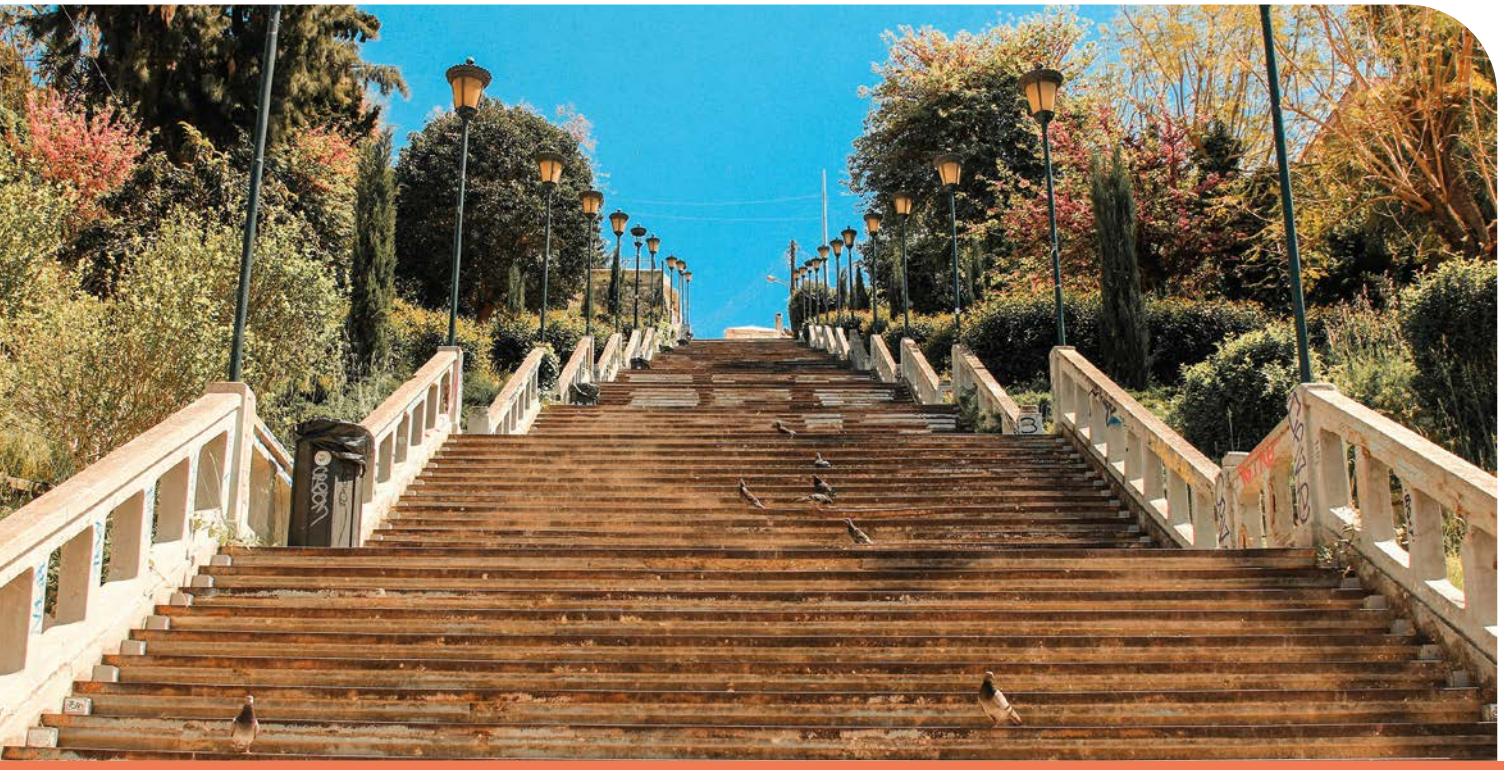
Day 3: Thursday

26 November 2026

From Olympia to public health: what can Ancient Greece teach us about well-being?

This study tour to Ancient Olympia offers an opportunity to reflect on the links between the ancient Greek understanding of physical activity, well-being and community life and the principles of modern public health. Through a visit to the archaeological site and museum, followed by a visit to the Oncologic Hostel "Elpida", participants will explore how ideas of health, prevention, care and social well-being have evolved — and what lessons the past can offer for building healthier communities today.

7:00 - 08:30	**Breakfast at the hotel**
08:30	**Gathering in front of the My Way Hotel and departure by bus**
10:00	**Arrival in Ancient Olympia**
10:00 – 12:30	**Field visit to the archaeological site and museum** *Health, physical activity, well-being and community in the context of ancient Greece* *Welcome address by the Mayor of Olympia / group photo*
13:00	**Return by bus**



14:30 – 15:00	**Visit to the Oncologic Hostel "Elpida", Patras (Rio)** **A contemporary example of community-centred support and care**
15:15	**Light lunch at the hotel**
15:30 – 16:45	**Healthy ageing and demographic change** ***Kira Fortune***, WHO, Senior Adviser and RHN Coordinator, European Office for Investment for Health and Development, Venice *This session will help regional authorities identify healthy ageing priorities and effective ways to support older people, including those living with dementia or frailty.* • **Yongjie Yon**, Technical Officer, WHO European Office for Investment for Health and Development, Venice Office (***ONLINE***) • **Panagiotopoulos Elias**, Emeritus Professor of Orthopaedics and Traumatology, University of Patras, Greece; Founding President of the Hellenic Fragility Fracture Network (FFN Greece). • **Panagiotis (Panos) Alexopoulos**, Professor of Psychiatry-Psychogeriatrics, Department of Psychiatry, School of Medicine, University of Patrasd • **Naiara Artaza Aristondo**, Director General of Longevity and Demographic Challenge, Department of Social Action, Provincial Council of Bizkaia • **Ana Maria Carriazo**, Senior Advisor, Regional Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs of Andalusia, Seville, Andalusia, Spain
16:45 – 17:15	**Coffee break and networking**
17:15 – 18:30	**Public health communication, trust and health literacy** **MODERATOR: *Milena Oikonomou***, Consultant, WHO European Office for Investment for Health and development, Venice *The session will explore how regions can build public trust and health literacy through clear, inclusive, community-focused communication, helping people make informed health decisions and strengthening more equitable, resilient health systems.* • **Siff Malue Nielsen**, Technical Officer, Behavioural and Cultural Insights Unit, WHO Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen, Denmark (***ONLINE***) • **Konstantina Vasileiou**, Project Officer, WHO Office on Quality of Care and Patient Safety, Athens, Greece • **Dimitra Spyropoulou**, Health Promotion Education Researcher, Educational Policy and Comparative Education Group, Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education, University of Patras, Greece (***ONLINE***) • **Amalia A. Ifanti**, Professor of Educational Planning and Policy, Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education, University of Patras, Greece. • **Konstantinos Chortis**, Member of the Executive Secretariat of the National Confederation of Disabled People (ESAmeA), serving as Alternate Officer for International Relations, Presentation on *Disabilities, Chronic and Rare Diseases: Needs, Gaps and the Role of Digital Tools in Accessibility* • **Marios Vlachogiannis**, Chemical Engineer, Department of Chemical Engineering, University of Patras; Member of the University of Patras Volunteer Team "Ethexis" (*Wellbeing of new generations*)
20:00 – 22:00	**Dinner with the sea view in close on foot distance from the May Way hotel with traditional music and dances**
22:00	**Return to the hotel**

Day 4: Friday

27 November 2026

From regional innovation to collective action: shaping the future of the RHN

The final day will bring together the key lessons and ideas emerging from the Annual Meeting and translate them into a shared agenda for action. Through reports from the previous days' moderators and participants, and a policy roundtable on scaling regional innovations, participants will explore how successful practices can move from pilot initiatives to wider implementation, while strengthening collaboration across the Network. The day will culminate in the adoption of the Western Greece Declaration and a discussion of RHN's priorities for 2027–2028, setting a common direction for the Network and reinforcing its role in advancing innovative, equitable and resilient health systems at regional level.

09:30 – 10:45

From good practice to system change: how do we scale regional innovation?

MODERATOR: *Anna Mastorakou*, Deputy Regional Governor for Public Health, Region of Western Greece, Patras

- **Policy Roundtable**

Regional leaders and practitioners discuss what it takes to move promising initiatives from pilot projects to sustainable implementation. The conversation will explore the enabling conditions for scaling — including governance, financing, data, partnerships and political commitment — and how RHN can help regions learn from and support one another.

1. *Linking regions with similar problems*
2. *One health*
3. *Gaining trust in media*

- **Afsaneh Nejat**, Policy & Practice Officer, EuroHealthNet, Brussels, Belgium
- **Peter Beznec**, Head of the Centre for Health and Development, Murska Sobota, Slovenia
- **Nikolaos S. Voros**, Director, Embedded Systems Design and Applications Laboratory (ESDA Lab), University of Peloponnese, Greece.
- **Ignatios Fotiou**, President, TOBEA (Thinking Out of the Box Engineering Applications), Greece

10:45–11:15

What do we bring back home?

MODERATOR: *Milena Oikonomou*, Consultant, WHO European Office for Investment for Health and development, Venice

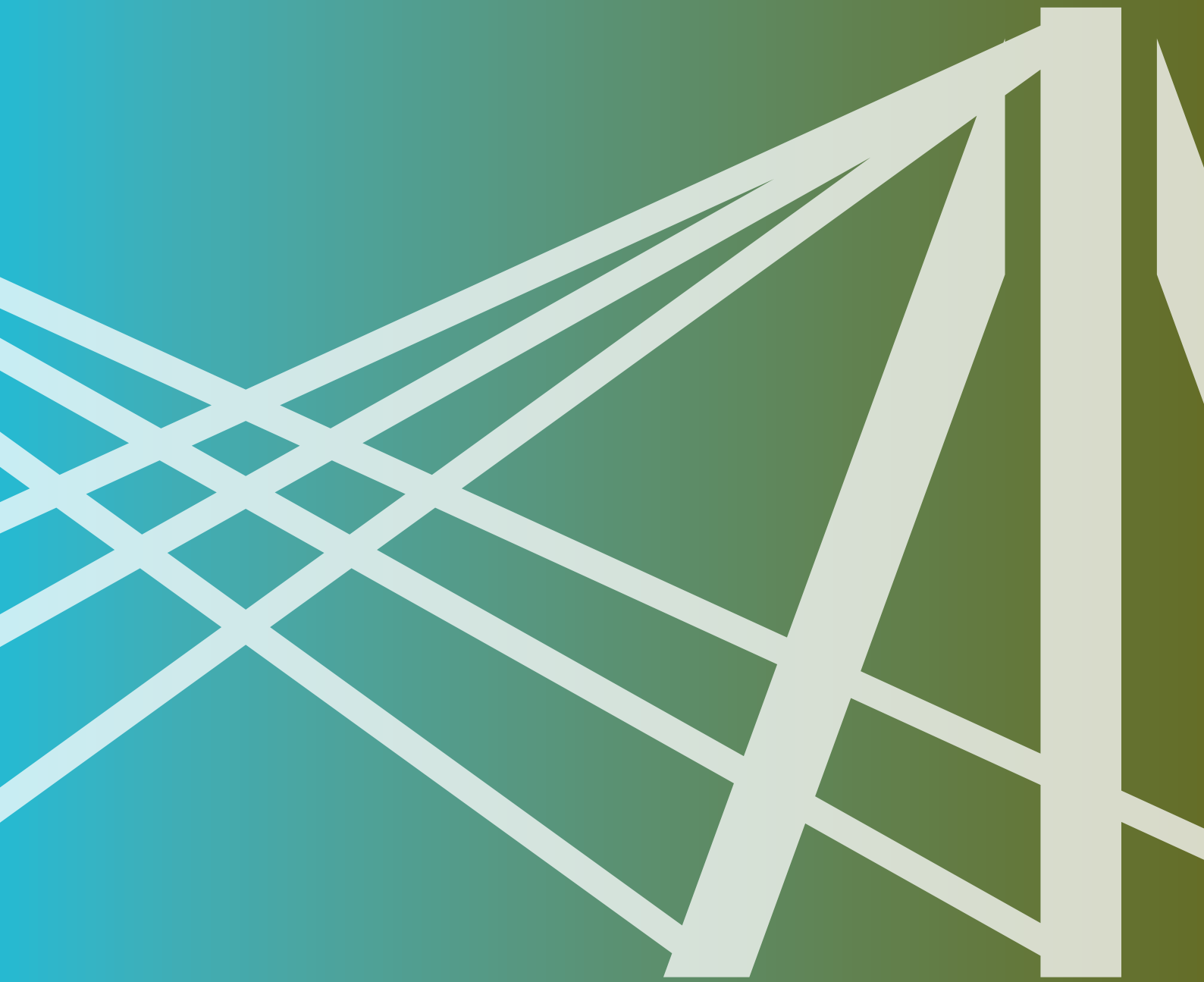
Insights into previous days' discussions

A rapid and dynamic synthesis of the Working Groups, highlighting the key findings, shared challenges and solutions that have emerged across regions.

A guided discussion into the proposed Memorandum of Understanding between the Healthy Cities and the Regions for Health Networks.

11:15–11:30	**Coffee Break**
11:30–12:15	**Looking Ahead: The Western Greece Statement** **MODERATORS:** ***Kira Fortune***, WHO, Senior Adviser and RHN Coordinator, European Office for Investment for Health and Development, Venice ***Anna Mastorakou***, Deputy Regional Governor for Public Health, Region of Western Greece, Patras A short video on the next 2027 host region (***PRE-RECORDED***) *An interactive discussion to identify the Network's common priorities and define the collaboration agenda for the next two years, followed by the presentation and adoption of the Western Greece Declaration. The Declaration will articulate a shared regional perspective on One Health, trust, data-informed policy, resilience, and the opportunities and challenges of AI for health*
12:15–13:00	**RHN Business meeting** **MODERATOR: *Kira Fortune***, WHO, Senior Adviser and RHN Coordinator, European Office for Investment for Health and Development, Venice *An opportunity for RHN members to take stock of the Network's achievements, reflect on its financial sustainability and collectively shape its future direction:* • *Review of recent activities and achievements, presentation of the Network's financial overview (income and expenditure), and discussion and agreement on priorities and activities for the year ahead.* • *Exploring funding opportunities, potential partnerships and avenues to strengthen the Network's financial sustainability and support its future development.*
13:00	**Lunch**

RHN 2026: Working and Background Documents



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