

Post-pandemic Europe must invest more in health care: WHO

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Europe must continue to invest in health care after the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Health Organization's European region chief said Wednesday, denouncing the "deafening silence" on the subject.

As things stood, it was far from clear that the region was in better shape to withstand another pandemic than before the COVID crisis, he warned.

"It's amazing. We lost 7 million people. And minister after minister is telling me that they have to fight like hell to keep the same level of investment in health," Hans Kluge told AFP in an interview.

"The focus is to break the deafening post-pandemic silence," he said.

Funding needs to be increased across the WHO's European region, to combat the lack of [health care](#) workers which Kluge described as a "catastrophe".

The [region](#)'s 53 countries—including some in Central Asia—also needed to address a shortage of basic medicines such as paracetamol and antibiotics.

"My definition of resilience is to bounce back stronger from a crisis. And we didn't do this," Kluge said.

"If tomorrow there's a pandemic, I cannot tell you that we are in better shape in terms of equitable access to vaccines and medical countermeasures," he warned.

He acknowledged that Europe had understood that European Union member states would never be safe without its neighbors also being safe.

"But this is still not enough."

International solidarity was needed even more during times of war, he said, sounding a pessimistic note on Ukraine.

"With everything else that is happening now, and the world's attention

spread out, this could become a very, very dark ... [cold winter](#) for the Ukrainian people."

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