

# WHO says COVID vaccines saved at least 1.4 mn lives in Europe

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Credit: Maksim Goncharenok from Pexels

At least 1.4 million lives have been saved in Europe thanks to COVID vaccines, the World Health Organization said on Tuesday, recalling that the virus was "here to stay".

The WHO European [region](#)—which covers 53 [countries](#) including those of Central Asia—has registered more than 277.7 million cases of COVID-19 and more than 2.2 million deaths, according to the organization's most recent data, from December 19, 2023.

"Today, there are 1.4 million people in our region—most of them elderly—who are around to enjoy life with their loved ones because they took the vital decision to be vaccinated against COVID-19," WHO Europe regional director Hans Kluge told reporters.

"The first booster doses alone saved an estimated 700,000 lives."

Kluge said it was essential for people to protect themselves, especially those most vulnerable, during the winter.

"As we learn to live with COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses, it's absolutely vital for vulnerable populations to stay up to date with their COVID-19 and influenza vaccinations as recommended."

Europe must continue to invest in its health care systems, he said.

"We may be unprepared for anything out-of-the-ordinary, such as the emergence of a new, more severe COVID-19 variant or a yet unknown pathogen."

He called for more funding to resolve shortages of health care workers and basic medication.

"I am deeply concerned that health is slipping from the political agenda and that we are failing to address the ticking time-bomb facing our health and care workforce," Kluge said.

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