

Health Law

Definition of Health by the WHO

- The modern understanding of health became official when the World Health Organization (WHO), at the time of its establishment in 1948, included the definition of health in its Constitution.
- The definition was proposed by Dr Andrija Štampar, a prominent scholar from Croatia in the field of social medicine and public health and one of the founders of the WHO.
- This generally accepted definition states that “health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”.
- This definition promoted for the first time that, in addition to physical and mental health, social welfare is an integral component of the overall health, because health is closely linked to the social environment and living and working conditions.

- Respecting this definition as a global concept, many researchers and theorists subsequently advocated for adoption of working, practical, and operational definitions of health.
- In 1977, with the adoption of the WHO Global Strategy “Health for All by the Year 2000”, a pragmatic concept of health – the ability to conduct a socially and economically productive life – was accepted indirectly, which was an essential goal of this Strategy

- To define health in operational and working terms was vital for creating policies and programs for maintaining and improving health, and it considerably managed to exceed the widely rooted notion that health simply means the absence of disease.
- The Ottawa Charter from the 1st International Conference on Health Promotion, held in Ottawa, Canada, in 1986, says that health is created in the context of everyday life and environment, where people live, love, work, and play.
- Thus, active and interactive understanding of health was introduced. The goal of health promotion is to combine the approach for addressing the social determinants with the resolution and commitment to motivate and encourage the individuals and the community for their active approach toward health and embracing healthy lifestyles

- Within the last few decades, the WHO definition of health has been increasingly amended and supplemented by the fourth dimension – spiritual health.
- Generally speaking, spiritual health involves a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction with our own lives, system of values, self-confidence and self-esteem, self-awareness and presence, peacefulness and tranquility with dynamic emotional balance, both internal and toward the environment, morality and truthfulness, selflessness, positive emotions, compassion and willingness to help and support others, responsibility and contribution to the common good, and successful management of everyday life problems and demands as well as social stress.