

**ANALYSIS**

# The WHO's New Pandemic Center Isn't Ready for Action

For now, the health agency's newest hub is mostly just for show.

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Last September, Germany's soon-to-be-retired chancellor, Angela Merkel, inaugurated a new World Health Organization (WHO) hub in Berlin that has one main mission: preventing another pandemic from spreading the way COVID-19 did. The then-chancellor said during the COVID-19 pandemic, "experts from around the world have been expanding their knowledge at an incredible rate and sharing it to decode the coronavirus."

Merkel cut the ribbon in front of the new center alongside Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the World Health Organization's director-general. She did so in front of a gray wall with the center's name on a plaque, saying: "The WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence was inaugurated on 1 September 2021." However, what they really inaugurated was a fake slab of concrete propped up in the middle of a Berlin event venue.

Although the glamorous event, attended by top names in global health, government, and other sectors, celebrated the opening of the WHO's new venture, it was mostly just for show. The new hub's mission is admirably ambitious. But it's unclear how a highly political and notoriously bureaucratic international organization will succeed in implementing what's being billed as a startup-style project.