

NDPHS Expert Group on Non-communicable Diseases TERMS OF REFERENCE

As adopted by the CSR on
7 July 2016

I. Background

Pursuant to the following provision for the Committee of Senior Representatives (CSR) as spelled out in the “Declaration Concerning the Establishment of a Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being”, adopted by the Ministerial Meeting in Oslo, Norway, on 27 October 2003:

- “In order to carry out its tasks, the Committee of Senior Representatives may establish Expert Groups, consisting of experts from interested Partners and Participants and other international experts, as appropriate,”

the CSR decided at its 25th meeting in Stockholm, Sweden, on 21-22 October 2015 to establish the **NDPHS Expert Group (EG) on Non-communicable Diseases**.

II. Objectives and timeframe

The Expert Group on NCD shall facilitate and implement the **Objective 3: Reduced impact of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) – through strengthened prevention and addressing lifestyle-related risk factors** as specified in the NDPHS Strategy 2020 by facilitating the implementation of activities defined within **this Objective** in the Action Plan accompanying the NDPHS Strategy 2020. Further, in the course of its regular work the Expert Group together with other bodies of the NDPHS will contribute to achieving the Horizontal results defined in the Action Plan accompanying the NDPHS Strategy 2020.

The mandate of the Expert Group is valid until the end of 2020.

The Expert Group is accountable to the CSR and PAC.

III. Aims and functions

According to the above mentioned Oslo Declaration, under the guidance of the CSR, an Expert Group may have an advisory role and/or provide professional input to the preparation and implementation of joint activities carried out within the framework of the Partnership. Also, the Declaration permits Expert Groups to “facilitate professional exchanges, increase co-ordination among Partners and Participants and monitor joint activities within their area of expertise.”

Consistent with these provisions, the Expert Group has the following functions:

- Exchange information and knowledge about best practices to assist the partner countries in achieving the objectives defined in the NDPHS Strategy 2020;
- Use available statistical and epidemiological information from official sources to assist decision makers and contribute to the achievement of the objectives defined in the NDPHS Strategy 2020;
- Identify priorities, needs for support in developing policies and gaps in their implementation;
- Initiate projects, provide when possible, support in planning, monitoring and dissemination of results;
- Provide the Partnership website/database/newsletters with information concerning the Expert Group's work;
- Provide feedback and report on progress to the CSR;
- Co-ordinate its activities with other NDPHS structures, relevant groups and international networks in areas of mutual interest in a manner that promotes synergies and avoids the duplication of efforts and supports the achievement of objectives included in the NDPHS Strategy 2020;
- Contribute to proper discharging of the Partnership's responsibilities as the Coordinator for the Health Policy Area in the Action Plan of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region together with other NDPHS structures, as appropriate;
- Be open to innovate and employ new methods of work to improve collaboration between the partner countries and other relevant stakeholders. Document CSR 24/9.3/1 "New approaches for future collaboration within the NDPHS" can provide suggestions in this regard;
- Other relevant responsibilities, as approved by the CSR or the Partnership Annual Conference (PAC).

The official languages of the Expert Group are English and Russian. Meetings are conducted in English, documents are provided in both languages. Related costs for translation and interpretation, if necessary, are covered by the Russian Federation.

IV. Outputs and Results

The general scope of outputs and results from the work of the Expert Group shall be as follows:

- Better implementation of HiAP at all levels, with an additional focus on social determinants for health and disease, for more effective prevention of non-communicable diseases;
- Strengthened stakeholder involvement in preventing overweight and obesity among different target populations (school age children and their families, health care and school professionals, etc);
- Better comprehensive national health system involvement and response to reduce NCD burden in the Northern Dimension area;
- Expert Group meetings organised and meeting minutes disseminated;
- Work plan (s), progress reports: the mid-term reports and the final report submitted.

V. Lead Partner and co-Lead Partner

The Lead Partner and Co-Lead Partner are representing NDPHS countries or Partner-Organizations. Lead Partner proposes Chair, Vice-Chair and ITA; Co-Lead Partner proposes Co-Chair.

The Expert Group will be led by Russia and co-led by the WHO-Europe (to be confirmed). The role of the Lead Partner and Co-Lead Partner is to initiate and jointly lead the Expert Group's activities.

In the case that the Lead Partner or the co-Lead Partner decides to step down, prior to its resignation, they should inform the CSR of their intentions and propose a replacement, if possible. The CSR will decide whether to approve the proposed replacement.

VI. Composition of the Expert Group

The Expert Group shall elect its Chair, Vice-Chair, Co-Chair and ITA from the individuals nominated (the Lead Partner has a privilege of proposing the Chair, Vice-Chair and ITA, while Co-Lead Partner has a privilege of proposing the Co-Chair of the Expert Group. In doing so, it is responsible for keeping the CSR and the NDPHS Secretariat informed of its decision. The Expert Group Chair, Co-Chair, Vice-Chair, and ITA are elected for the duration of the Expert Group's mandate unless decided otherwise by the Lead and Co-Lead Partners.

1. Chair, Co-Chair, and Vice-Chair

The Chair is responsible for providing effective leadership concerning the Group's overall aims and functions spelled out above. In addition, the Chair is responsible for:

- Chairing the EG meetings;
- Drawing the agenda for the meeting of the EG;
- Ensuring that the EG meetings meet at appropriate intervals, the minutes of meetings and any reports to the Partnership bodies accurately record the decisions taken and, where appropriate, the views of individual Partner Country representatives
- Ensuring that the EG reaches clear conclusions on the matters it discusses;
- Ensuring that the views of the EG are passed on to the CSR, PAC and other NDPHS structures;
- Communicating the EG's views to relevant stakeholders and the public, as requested;
- Identify priorities, needs for support in developing EG's Action Plan and Projects, barriers and possible decisions in their implementation;
- Elaboration, supervision, and revision the scientific content of the EG's projects and their monitoring;
- Co-ordinate EG activities with other NDPHS structures, relevant groups and international networks in areas of mutual interest towards to support the achievement of objectives included in the NDPHS Strategy 2020, in a manner that promotes synergies and avoids the duplication of activities;
- Supervise the proper discharging of the Partnership's responsibilities as the Coordinator for the Health Policy Area in the Action Plan of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region together with other NDPHS structures, as appropriate;
- Provide feedback and report on progress to the CSR and PAC;
- Briefing new representatives upon their appointment, as appropriate;

- Participating in other relevant meetings and conferences related to the substance areas of the EG, as feasible.

Any of these activities may be delegated by the Chair to the Co-Chair or Vice-Chair, ITA.

In the event that the Chair can no longer perform his/her duties, the Co-Chair shall serve as Interim Chair pending the election of a new Chair. In the event that both the Chair and Vice-Chair no longer hold their positions, an Expert Group Lead Partner representative shall serve as the Interim Chair pending the election of a new Chair and Vice-Chair.

Co-Chair is responsible for:

- Ensuring a broader support from NDPHS Partner Countries/Organizations to the NCD EG activities towards to actively engaged in promoting/advancing the NCD agenda within the NDPHS Strategy and Action Plan 2020;
- Providing diverse expertise of the EG activities throughout the contacts with experts from different countries that can be benefit for the EG;
- Enriching the progress in the EG activities by shairing with accumulated knowledge and international experiences;
- Advising sources of possible funding and technical support from the EG home as well as international organizations.

Other responsibilities of Co-Chair can be suggested by the NCD EG Chair.

2. International Technical Advisor

The Lead Partner shall appoint the Expert Group's International Technical Advisor (ITA), subject to the approval of the Expert Group. The ITA is appointed for the duration of the Expert Group's mandate unless decided otherwise by the Lead Partner. The ITA is responsible for:

- Providing advisory and technical support to the Expert Group in collaboration with the Chair;
- Providing scientific input to the EG's work;
- Assisting the Chair in preparation, conducting and follow-up on Expert Group meetings, including preparation and circulation of meeting documents and minutes;
- Assisting the Chair in monitoring the overall progress of activities relevant to his/her Expert Group, stipulated in the Action Plan accompanying the NDPHS Strategy 2020 and assisting the Chair in drafting and submitting documents such as the annual progress report and work plan to the CSR or PAC;
- Assisting in (i) either initiating and evaluating projects or planning and developing projects, (ii) facilitating applications for project financing and, finally, (iii) assisting with project implementation, if needed;
- Keeping in contact with Expert Group members in-between the meetings;
- Maintaining continuous dialogue with the NDPHS structures and liaising with other relevant regional and international actors to follow up on on-going collaboration and ensure relevant stakeholder engagement;
- Managing and monitoring the Partnership website/database/newsletters with information concerning the Expert Group's work
- Representing the Expert Group at the CSR, PAC and other relevant fora.

3. General Representation and Participation

General representation within the Expert Group shall consist of experts appointed to the Expert Group by interested Partner Countries and Partner Organisations.

The Expert Group may include one or more representatives from each Partner Country and Organisation. In order to facilitate continuity and active participation, the Partner Countries and Organisations should consider nominating 1-2 alternates for each Main representative in the Expert Group who will step in for the main representative when necessary. In order to support the successful implementation of the NDPHS strategy the Partner Countries and Organisations are advised to take the following criteria into consideration:

- High level expertise in health and social well-being issues and activities in the field covered by the Expert Group;
- Experience in networking and reaching out to experts familiar with the regional aspects;
- Experience in policy development, project facilitation and assessment;
- Ability to actively take part in and contribute to the Expert Group work towards the set Objectives and Targets (both during meetings and in-between them);
- Participation in relevant governmental or non-governmental scientific and technical committees at national, regional and international levels would be an additional asset.

Expert Group members should contribute to the work of the Expert Group and act as a link between the Expert Group and their own national authorities and organizations.

If a Partner Country or Partner Organisation changes their appointed Main representatives, it should inform the Expert Group Chair, Co-Chair, Vice-Chair, ITA and the NDPHS Secretariat.

In addition to the appointed Partner Country and Partner Organisation representatives, the Expert Group is entitled to invite external actors, i.e. other "eligible participants"¹ and "interested parties"² as defined in the Oslo Declaration, to be involved in the work of the Expert Group.

VII. Meetings

The Expert Group shall meet regularly, holding at least two meetings per year if possible. The location of meetings will rotate based on the interest expressed by the Partners.

¹ "Eligible partners will be the Founding partners, EU Member States and Northern Dimension Partner Countries, the European Commission and other relevant EU Institutions, regional co-operation bodies, international organisations and financing institutions. Eligible participants are interested sub-national administrative entities in the Northern Dimension area. Other countries or organisations associated with the Northern Dimension may become Partners or Participants of the Partnership in accordance with national legislation or statutes and through a procedure to be established by the Committee of Senior Representatives." For Eligible Partner Organisations the following statements should be taken into consideration: none of projects duplication and conflict interests

² "Other interested parties, such as relevant non-governmental organisations and private sector entities may participate in the funding and/or implementation of activities within the framework of the Partnership and may be invited to Partnership meetings in the capacity of observers or guests."

The Expert Group Chair may invite the NDPHS Secretariat, representatives from the Chair Country and experts from national, international or regional organisations to participate in the Expert Group's meetings.

Except as otherwise herein stated, the Expert Group will determine its own methods of work, including the preparation of agendas, the keeping of records and other procedures.

The Expert Group will ensure that all decisions are communicated to the NDPHS decision-making bodies (CSR and PAC), as appropriate.

VIII. Coordination, Supervision and Financial Aspects

The CSR is responsible for supervising the work of the Expert Group.

For co-ordination purposes, the Expert Group Chair, Vice-Chair and ITA should hold regular (annual or biannual) meetings with the Chair country, Secretariat and other Expert Groups' Chairs and ITAs.

As the Partnership cannot bear the travel and other costs related to Expert Group representatives' participation in Expert Group meetings, their respective countries or organisations will cover all expenses incurred by the representatives to attend Expert Group meetings. Costs for holding meetings will be borne by the host country unless otherwise agreed.

If other sources are interested in supporting the work of the Expert Group, they should do so through the CSR, in close co-operation with the Expert Group Chair.

The Lead Partner and/or other interested Partner Countries shall provide financial support to the Expert Group to aid its activities. This includes, but is not limited to the employment costs of the Expert Group Chair and the ITA, as well as their travel costs to attend relevant meetings.

IX. Decision Making and Reporting

The Expert Group will prepare, in accordance with the rules adopted by the CSR: (i) an annual Progress Report from preceding year, to be submitted to the spring CSR meeting and (ii) draft Work Plan for the following year, to be submitted to the autumn CSR or PAC, as appropriate.

A mid-term report shall be submitted to the spring CSR meeting in 2018. A final report shall be submitted to the PAC in 2020. These reports shall reflect the activities undertaken by the Expert Group towards achieving the respective NDPHS Strategy 2020 Objectives and their Targets. The Expert Group shall also provide input to the overall report by presenting its contributions toward the achievement of the Horizontal results.

In order to ensure proper co-ordination and transparency, all progress reports and work plans will be shared with all Expert Group representatives, the Group's Chair, Vice-Chair, Co-Chair, as well as the Lead and Co-Lead Partner authorities. The progress reports and work plans will also be shared with the CSR and PAC, and the NDPHS Secretariat, which can in turn share the reports with other Partner Countries and Partner Organisations.

The Expert group should aim for consensus. In case there is disagreement, the Chair suggests the decisive approach: he/she casts the decisive vote or calls for wider consultations on the issue.

Only Country appointed representatives to the Expert Group take part in decision-making. However, the Main representative of the country to the NCD Expert Group finalizes and declares the official country position.

The outcomes of each Expert Group meeting shall be documented in the meeting minutes and published on the NDPHS website along with all meeting documents.

In addition to these Terms of Reference, the Expert Group can elaborate more precise strategies and action plans, which highlight the methods by which the NDPHS Objectives and Targets will be reached. These strategies and action plans can be updated at Expert Group meetings, and any changes will be communicated to the CSR through the NDPHS Secretariat.

X. Amendments to the Terms of Reference

The NDPHS CSR has agreed the model of the Terms of Reference on 21 October 2015. The provisions agreed upon by the CSR can be amended or deleted only by the CSR. The Expert Group shall approve the proposed amendments—before their submission to the CSR through the NDPHS Secretariat for possible adoption. The final Terms of Reference were adopted by the CSR via on-line procedure on 7 July 2016.

The Expert Group may decide on additional provisions in its Terms of Reference, provided they are compatible with the provisions adopted by the CSR, and subsequently revise these additional provisions. Any such additional provisions and subsequent amendments should be communicated by the Expert Group to the CSR through the NDPHS Secretariat within one week following the adoption of the respective provisions and/or amendments.

The amendment of the final Terms of Reference of the Expert Group should be adopted by the CSR via silent procedure.