



Northern Dimension
Partnership in Public Health
and Social Well-being
www.ndphs.org

Rules regarding NDPHS Expert Groups

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EXPERT GROUPS

1.1 The role of the Expert Groups

As stipulated by the Oslo Declaration, in order to carry out its tasks, the CSR may establish expert groups, consisting of experts from interested Partners and Participants and other international experts, as appropriate. The Declaration also clearly spelled out the role of the Expert Groups in the process. They are to support the CSR in the preparation and implementation of joint activities carried out within the framework of the Partnership, which should be understood, *inter alia*, to also include achieving the goals and priorities of the NDPHS, whether they are long, medium or short term. The common expertise gained through the co-operation is also a valuable asset for the NDPHS to offer Partners.

1.2 The establishment of an Expert Group

Flexibility as regards the kind of Expert Group

-  There should be a clear vision concerning the purpose of any given Expert Group.
-  Also, **the NDPHS should be able to use expert groups of different kinds and different duration in order to achieve the flexibility needed to adapt to different circumstances and needs.** Such expert groups could be of longer standing character, as the present EGs, or very short in order to work on a limited task.
-  In some cases **experts from all or some of the Expert Groups could come together in an *ad hoc* group to work on an assignment that is connected to those Expert Groups.**
-  For certain purposes **“expert pools” could be set up**, multi-topic, cross-section groups deployed or *ad hoc* working groups with a mandate which is limited in time, in order to identify and investigate topics which are relevant to health policy and point to possibilities for action.

In some justified cases it could be run by only a few Partners. The important thing is that this work is coordinated by the Secretariat, or with a special EG in case the subject-matter touches upon the subject area of that EG.

Criteria for establishing Expert Groups

Criteria for the establishment of new Expert Groups:

1. The CSR must be in agreement that there is a need to establish a new EG in order to achieve a certain goal/operational target(s) adopted by the Partnership.
2. Before an EG is established it has to be clear that the great majority of Partner countries are ready to support it and take part in its work. In a limited number of cases, such as when a given issue is relevant to a limited number of countries, which consider it important to cooperate about that issue within the framework of the NDPHS, it is sufficient that all the countries *concerned* support and plan to take part in the Expert Group, and the Partners which are not concerned at least accept it¹.

¹ One example could be a special activity directed towards indigenous peoples, a target group of the Declaration but which only exists in a limited number of Partner countries.

3. One Partner must have declared itself ready to be the EG's Lead Partner and take the responsibility to find financing for an International Technical Advisor (ITA) function. A co-lead Partner should also be identified.

Limitation in duration

-  **EGs' mandates should be time limited, also for the longer-term Expert Groups.** This would give an opportunity for evaluation and reflection on the need and direction of continued work, priorities, etc.

However, **the time given must take into account the need for a realistic period** in order to start, elaborate ideas for projects, develop and keep the contacts that are needed in order to facilitate the project. In some cases consortia are formed and coordinated by the EG, and this is a quite time-consuming task. Also, financiers of projects must be guaranteed that their financing is properly taken care of.

-  **A mandate be given to the Expert Groups that work towards the goals and objectives spelled out in the NDPHS Strategy for a given period of time.** In the meantime, the EG Chair should report and keep a dialogue with the CSR.

1.3 Dissolution of Expert Groups

-  **When it comes to the dismantling of an EG, the following *Criteria for termination of Expert Groups* shall be used:**

1. The EG has accomplished its task as assigned by the CSR.
2. The CSR has determined that there is no longer interest among Partners or financing bodies in the subject-matter of the EG. They discover that the Partnership duplicates work being done elsewhere.
3. The CSR has determined that the work is overtaken by other urgent priorities or financial problems make it impossible to proceed.
4. The CSR has determined that the EG has not made any progress for one year.

-  When meeting at least one of the above criteria, the EG may be dissolved before its mandate period ends.

-  **As an exception to the above,** if the EG can clearly demonstrate that there is promising progress, although at a given point in time it can show no concrete results, the CSR can allow it to continue and finish its work or take on a newly assigned task.

1.4 Reporting and evaluation

-  **Evaluation of the EGs should be undertaken in connection with the NDPHS overall external periodic evaluation.** The practice so far of reporting to the CSR at the end of each year would be enough for the CSR to assess the progress of the EGs, also as regards short-term EGs, and to give directions as regards their work.

However:

-  As regards the **annual/biennial Work Plans**, they should link to the adopted multi-annual targets, and show how far the process would have to have progressed after

each individual year/two years in order for the target to be attained in time. This would also make it possible for the CSR to evaluate the work of short term EGs.

-  As regards **evaluation of projects, the EGs shall not normally be required to do this** as different donors carry through evaluations of the projects that they finance, and these evaluations could be used for the benefit of the work of the EGs.

1.5 Expert Group Members and their participation in Expert Group work

Appointment of members in the Expert Groups:

-  **Members shall be appointed by their governments/national authorities. Also the Partner Organizations should appoint experts to EGs.**
-  Experts should be appointed for a **limited period of time** depending on the duration of the ToR of the group. When such a period is nearing, the Secretariat should approach the Partners and other interested bodies and ask for their appointments. This would result in either confirmation of the appointment of the same expert for the period to come or appointment of a new member of the EG.

The appointment of a member of an EG also means that the national authorities are ready to take the responsibility to finance the participation of their representatives. This includes both covering of the costs of travels and accommodation in connection with the meetings and some working time needed for the work for the EG, for example, five working days per year. Appointment of representatives should be made in writing, at the same time expressing the readiness to finance the participation and to allow time to work actively in the EG.

The representatives should be high-level experts in the field. EG ToRs should specify what kind of competence is needed. It is then up to the national authorities to see to it that they appoint representatives who have the competence needed for the respective EG.

The ideal situation would be that the different members of an EG cover as wide a field of competences as possible, among other things in the social field. One possibility to solve this could be that the CSR first discusses the need for different competence and agrees on which Partner should contribute which competence in order to cover as wide a field as possible or some special needs of an EG. If this is not possible the EG could establish co-operation with a university or other institutions that has the special competence needed.

Over and above the required competence, **the members of an EG should be expected to be active and contribute to the work of the EG in different ways, for example, bring their experience to the EG and act as a link between the EG and the own national relevant authorities and organizations.**

1.6 Dissemination of results. Contacts with regional and local authorities

-  **The dissemination of results is important as it brings a clear added value from the cooperation.** The Partnership should strive to **organize meetings and conferences where the regional theme is emphasized.**



- **The involvement of regional and local authorities at all stages of the co-operation is of vital importance.** Among other things, EGs could meet representatives of relevant authorities and NGOs in connection with their meetings.

1.7 Procedure for establishing/terminating an EG or a similar group



The following is the procedure for establishing/terminating an EG or a similar group.

1. On the initiative of the CSR Chair, a Partner or a Participant, the CSR discusses:
 - how to achieve the NDPHS short-, mid- or long-term goals, or,
 - how to handle a certain health situation, request etc., or
 - a proposal by one or more Partners to the CSR to establish an EG or a similar body on a certain problem/theme linked to the goals.
2. After the meeting the CSR representatives investigate the interest of their countries to establish an EG and to take part in the work. Before the next CSR meeting they inform the CSR Chair in writing (or, at the latest, orally during the meeting) whether their authorities support the proposal and whether the country (organization) wishes to take part in the work.
3. At the next CSR meeting a decision is made to establish (or not) the EG and what type of EG is established. The CSR could also consider other ways of closer co-operation. To that end, the CSR considers the *Criteria for establishing Expert Groups* (cf. sub-item 1.2 above). As an alternative, in order to speed up the process, a decision could be made in silent procedure.
4. When the decision to establish an EG has been made, a draft mandate and ToR are elaborated by the CSR.
5. Partners are invited to send the names of their representatives to the Secretariat.
6. At the first meeting, the new Expert Group is invited to give comments on the draft mandate and ToR and consequently they are finally adopted by the CSR.
7. During the period of the mandate the EG Chairs take part in the CSR meetings at least once a year, and always in the PAC. At these meetings they report on the progress of the work, possible deviations from their ToR. They also make an appraisal of the possibilities to continue the work, considering the developments as regards the field of responsibility of the EG, the interest of Partners and the possibilities to find financing for the basic needs of the EG. At these occasions a dialogue is to be held between the CSR (including the EG Lead Partner) and the EG Chair concerning the work and situation of the EG. In the first place, the dialogue should aim at helping the EG to improve its performance if necessary, in order to fulfill its task according to the mandate. If an EG needs to deviate considerably from its ToR this is to be approved by the CSR.
8. Such a dialogue could result in:
 - normal continuation of the work, or
 - a decision of the CSR to change the mandate/ToR of the EG, or
 - the dissolution of the EG before the mandate has come to an end. In this regard the *Criteria for termination of Expert Groups* are followed (cf. sub-item 1.3).
9. When the period of the mandate is nearing its end an assessment is made by the CSR as regards possible elaboration of a new mandate for a new period.