



EU Health Task Force Advisory Group Terms of Reference

Background

The [amended ECDC mandate](#) included the creation of an **EU Health Task Force (EUHTF)**. The EUHTF is established and coordinated by ECDC in cooperation with the EU/EEA Member States, the European Commission and international organisations. Upon request, the EUHTF provides timely support to EU/EEA Member States, partner countries and international organisations in strengthening countries' emergency preparedness and responding to emergencies during outbreaks of infectious diseases or of unknown origin as well as other crises with a cascading risk of infectious disease.

The EUHTF is composed of a permanent EUHTF **ECDC Coordination Team**, three EUHTF **Expert Pools (ECDC Expert Pool, ECDC Fellowship Pool, External Expert Pool)** and an EUHTF **Enhanced Emergency Capacity**. The EUHTF Coordination Team is a permanent entity in ECDC coordinating the EUHTF activities. The EUHTF Expert Pools are composed of experts from ECDC, fellows during their 2-year placement in the ECDC Fellowship Programme (i.e., EPIET and EUPHEM, EPIET-associated Programmes (EAP)), and external experts. These experts are identified based on their competencies, qualifications, experience and availability to deploy or provide remote support through the EUHTF. The EUHTF Enhanced Emergency Capacity is activated by ECDC and the European Commission in case of large-scale outbreaks, and draws resources from all EUHTF capacities.

ECDC, in efforts to establish the EUHTF, engaged over the course of its first year of operation (2023) with the Ad Hoc EUHTF Working Group to support and advise on the establishment of the EUHTF terms of reference, functioning and working arrangements. The Ad Hoc EUHTF Working Group was dissolved after one year of operation, handing over its responsibilities to the **EUHTF Advisory Group**, which is operating on a permanent basis since January 2024. Member States membership of the EUHTF Advisory Group is for two years, on a rotational basis.

Composition

The EUHTF Advisory Group is formed by:

The ECDC Coordination Team

- Head of Unit – Public Health Functions (HoU PHF)
- Head of Section - Emergency Preparedness and Response Support (HoS EPRS)

- Team members from EPR Readiness and Support Group

Six Member State representatives

Two members remaining from 2024, and four newly appointed members nominated by the Member State national focal points for Preparedness and Response.

Appointed representatives from European Commission DG:

- Birgit Snoeren, DG ECHO
- Isabella Panunzi, DG HERA
- Evelyn Depoortere, DG RTD
- Laura Gillini, DG SANTE

Appointed representative from the GOARN Operational Support Team (OST):

- Gianluca Loi

Appointed representative from European Medicines Agency (EMA)

- Manuela Mura

Appointed representative from WHO Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe):

- Oleg Storozhenko
- Adela Paez (as an alternate)

Appointed representative from the European Public Health Association (EUPHA):

- Ricardo Mexia, National Institute of Health Doutor Ricardo Jorge, Portugal

Appointed representative from NGO:

- Panu Saaristo, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Europe Region

Purpose

The purpose of the Advisory Group is to support and advise ECDC on operational, administrative and technical decisions for the routine management of the EUHTF:

- Priority areas of work and annual work planning
- EUHTF working modalities including requests for assistance and mobilisation of the EUHTF
- Engagement with and mobilisation of expertise from the EUHTF Expert Pools
- Review of protocols, resources and tools
- Evaluation on the process, procedures and functioning of the EUHTF to advise on revisions, to ensure continuous learning and improvement
- Opportunities for EUHTF assignments in Member States, in collaboration with the European Commission and international partners
- Advice on ongoing communication/awareness campaigns related to the EUHTF.

In relation to the support the Advisory Group will provide, ECDC will consider all advice reserving the right to make final decisions.

Timeline

The **Advisory Group** will be convened in Quarter 1 of 2025 and will meet, virtually or in person, on at least two occasions per year, approximately every six months. It will also be consulted ad hoc as required (see table below).

Planned meetings	Tentative dates (will be confirmed in January 2025)	Format and location
First meeting (2025) of the Advisory Group	Quarter 1 2025 (to be confirmed)	In person (currently preferred option) or online meeting – to be decided. Handover to new rotation of EUHTF Advisory Group members
Second meeting (2025) of the Advisory Group and EUHTF Annual Meeting	Quarter 4 2025 (to be confirmed)	Two back-to-back in person meetings, with the members of the EUHTF Advisory Group and with representatives from all EU/EEA MS together with relevant EUHTF stakeholders.
First meeting (2026) of the Advisory Group	Quarter 1 2026 (to be confirmed)	In person (currently preferred option) or online meeting – to be decided. Handover to new rotation of EUHTF Advisory Group members
Second meeting (2026) of the Advisory Group and EUHTF Annual Meeting	Quarter 4 2026 (to be confirmed)	Two back-to-back in person meetings, with the members of the EUHTF Advisory Group and with representatives from all EU/EEA MS together with relevant EUHTF stakeholders.
Consultations with the Advisory Group	As necessary	Consultations through virtual meetings or email exchange

Role of the Members of the EUHTF Advisory Group

ECDC Coordination Team:

- Ensure that the EUHTF Advisory Group members meet according to the agreed meeting plan and remain informed on key developments regarding the operation of the EUHTF
- Prepare and share relevant references for consultation with adequate time for the EUHTF Advisory Group members to review and provide input.

Member State representatives:

- Assist in promoting the EUHTF amongst stakeholders in Member States and identifying opportunities for EUHTF assignments
- Support review and improvement of procedures for identifying, selecting and assigning experts to EUHTF External Expert Pool and assignments
- Advise on priority areas for EUHTF work including scope, expert profiles and activities for support
- Advise and support on the development of protocols, resources and tools
- Advise on Member State experts' training needs.

European Commission and European Union agency representatives:

- DG SANTE: Support EUHTF advocacy, implementation of EUHTF activities and identification of EUHTF assignments. Support collaboration with other relevant DGs (e.g., NEAR, INPTA). Support timely exchange with Working Groups of the Health Security Committee, as relevant
- DG ECHO: Support routine EUHTF integration into DG ECHO emergency response mechanisms (e.g., UCPM/ERCC, EHRC). Collaborate in development and implementation of Service Level Agreements and other procedures to ensure logistical support and safety/security of EUHTF deployed experts. Ensure access to DG ECHO trainings where possible and relevant
- DG RTD: Support and collaborate in implementing EUHTF tasks related to research, ensuring collaboration with the EU framework programmes for research and innovation where possible. Facilitate links with relevant stakeholders such as academia and research networks
- DG HERA: Support for continued identification of areas for HERA and EUHTF collaboration, including in relation to operational research, training/capacity building activities and for any EUHTF work related to medical countermeasures and to other related areas of HERA's work
- EMA: Support identification and promotion of areas for EUHTF and EMA Emergency Task Force collaboration and information sharing, where relevant. Provide technical advice, in particular on operational research, following experience of the EMA Emergency Task Force.

GOARN, WHO EURO representatives:

- Support the ongoing collaboration with and integration of the EUHTF into global health emergency alert and response teams
- Assist in ensuring EUHTF teams are trained to and operate following common standards, are interoperable and rapidly deployable.

EUPHA:

- Support the identification of approaches to reach public health professionals in Europe
- Support the identification and promotion of areas for EUHTF collaboration and assignments
- Advice on available trainings of interest

NGO representative:

- Provide expert advice on the operation of the EUHTF, particularly on the operation of emergency alert and response teams
- Support the identification and promotion of areas for EUHTF collaboration and assignments
- Advice on available trainings of interest
- Facilitate liaison with partners in the field during EUHTF operations.