



**World Health  
Organization**

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR **Europe**

# Fourth meeting of the Regional Collaborating Committee on Tuberculosis Control and Care

WHO Regional Office for Europe, 17 November 2015

Report

## ABSTRACT

The fourth meeting of the Steering Group of the Regional Collaborating Committee on Tuberculosis Control and Care (RCC-TB) was held at the WHO Regional Office for Europe on 17 November 2015, with the participation of representatives of the WHO country offices in the Region. This report summarizes the key achievements of RCC-TB in 2015, the outcome of working-group sessions during the meeting, and the future action of the Committee.

## KEYWORDS

Communicable disease control  
Extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis  
International cooperation  
Tuberculosis  
Tuberculosis, multi-drug resistant

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## Abbreviations

ECDC	European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention
EECA	eastern Europe and central Asia
EU	European Union
GFATM	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
M/XDR-TB	multidrug- and extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis
NGO	nongovernmental organization
RCC-TB	Regional Collaborating Committee on Tuberculosis Control and Care
TB	tuberculosis
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

## Introduction

The Regional Collaborating Committee on Tuberculosis Control and Care (RCC-TB) (1) was established in September 2011 in response to the adoption of the *Consolidated action plan to prevent and combat multidrug- and extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis in the WHO European Region, 2011–2015* (resolution EUR/RC61/R7) by the 53 European Member States at the 61st session of the Regional Committee for Europe in Baku, Azerbaijan, in 2011 (2).

RCC-TB provides an interactive platform for stakeholders, including donors, technical agencies, professional societies, and patient and community representatives, to exchange information related to multidrug- and extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis (M/XDR-TB) response, and to advocate for action. It comprises a steering group and a network of members with the overall mission of working towards universal access to evidence-based prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care of tuberculosis (TB) and M/XDR-TB across the Region.

The *Global strategy and targets for tuberculosis prevention, care and control* (the End-TB strategy) was adopted by the Sixty-seventh World Health Assembly on 21 May 2014 (Resolution WHA67.1) (3,4). This strategy was adapted to the regional level under the new Tuberculosis action plan for the WHO European Region 2016–2020 (5) adopted at the 65th session of the Regional Committee for Europe in Vilnius, Lithuania, in September 2015. The actions and interventions of RCC-TB should, therefore, link to both the End-TB strategy and the new regional TB action plan for 2016–2020 (4,5).

The fourth meeting of RCC-TB was held at the WHO Regional Office for Europe on 17 November 2015, and involved members and observers of the Steering Group, as well as representatives of WHO country offices in the Region. The meeting was conducted in English and Russian with simultaneous interpretation. The programme and list of participants are found in Annexes 1 and 2, respectively.

## Objectives

The objectives of the meeting were to:

- provide an update of the challenges met and progress made in key activities related to RCC-TB, such as the new TB regional eastern Europe and central Asian (EECA) project (6);
- discuss how to further synergize actions and activities to optimize the contribution of RCC-TB to TB prevention, care and control in the WHO European Region;
- discuss the contributions of RCC-TB to the sustainability of TB and HIV prevention and care in the WHO European Region in the context of transition;
- present and discuss good practices of TB and HIV prevention and care, particularly with regard to the more systematic and efficient involvement of nongovernmental

- organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations in TB prevention and care (for example, social contracting);
- discuss possible means of RCC-TB support to the introduction of new TB drugs and adherence to TB treatment to prevent the further development of TB drug resistance; and
  - discuss how key events in the WHO European Region could consolidate achievements made in TB prevention and care, particularly in view of the implementation of the current regional *Roadmap to prevent and combat drug-resistant TB 2011–2015 (7)* and the TB action plan for the European Region 2016–2020 (5).

## Opening

Ms Fanny Voitzwinkler, Chairperson, RCC-TB, and Dr Masoud Dara, acting Programme Manager, Joint Tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis Programme, WHO Regional Office for Europe, welcomed the participants and applauded the extension of RCC-TB with stakeholders working with harm reduction and HIV in the Region. They encouraged all participants to contribute actively to the meeting and share their ideas and experiences towards achieving the mission and objectives of RC-TB.

## RCC achievements in 2015

### High-level meetings

The key achievements of RCC-TB 2015 included three high-level political events:

- the Ministerial Conference on “The Fight against HIV/AIDS ten years after the Dublin Declaration”, Rome, Italy, November 2014 (under the Italian EU Presidency);
- the 1st Eastern Partnership Ministerial Conference on TB and MDR-TB, Riga, Latvia, March 2015 (under the Latvian EU Presidency); and
- the Regional High-Level Dialogue on Successful Transition to Domestic Funding of HIV and TB Response in EECA, Tbilisi, Georgia, September 2015.

The conferences proved to be instrumental in bringing TB to the political agenda in the Region. However, follow-up work is needed to hold politicians accountable and to push at multiple levels for the continued implementation of their declarations.

### Lessons learnt

Important lessons learnt include the following.

- Joint and timely cooperation between all partners to achieve a common objective is effective in getting the ball rolling at the political level.
- It is important to work with countries (especially the host country) both before and after a conference to ensure continued awareness and commitment.
- High-level missions to the host country before a conference are essential.

- Engaging with local civil society organizations and communities in the run-up to the conference and afterwards helps to keep politicians accountable.
- Engaging ministries other than the ministry of health (for example, ministries of finance and social affairs) is a challenge and requires a coordinated strategic approach.
- It is important to engage also with members of parliament, parliamentary health committees and mayors in the run-up to the conference.
- For conferences and events relating to TB, HIV or harm reduction, care should be taken to ensure the participation of stakeholders from all three areas to maximize effects and synergies.
- Involving the media, including the more analytic media (e.g. The Economist, The Guardian) in good time prior to a conference allows them to do their own research, increasing the chances that they will participate and report from, or in response to, the event.

## Working-group discussions

After fruitful and animated plenary discussions, the participants broke into working groups to discuss the future actions of the RCC-TB in three specific areas.

### **Working Group 1: sustainability and transition – run-up to the 2016 Slovak EU Presidency**

A ministerial conference on communicable diseases is planned for autumn 2016 under the Slovak EU Presidency. This conference represents an important opportunity for RCC-TB to follow-up on, and press for the implementation of, the Joint Riga Declaration on TB and MDR-TB adopted at the 1st Eastern Partnership Ministerial Conference on Tuberculosis and its Multi-Drug Resistance held in Riga, Latvia, in March 2015, and to renew political awareness of TB in the European Union (EU) and the WHO European Region.

Based on lessons learnt from past ministerial conferences, Working Group 1 recommended that RCC-TB (or a subgroup of the Committee) start its preparations well in advance of the planned conference in Slovakia. This includes:

- developing a list of concrete areas on which to focus at the conference;
- encouraging and supporting the Slovak organizers in the development of materials for the conference, for example, council statements;
- organizing a high-level mission to Slovakia at the beginning of 2016; and
- working closely with EU parliamentarians to ensure their interest in and commitment to the conference.

### **Working Group 2: community and civil-society involvement in TB and HIV programmes**

As a multistakeholder platform, RCC-TB plays an important role in enhancing community and civil-society involvement in TB and HIV programmes. Based on discussions on the draft RCC-TB advocacy fact sheet, “Engaging communities and

civil society in TB Care”, and the general potential of RCC-TB in community and civil-society involvement, Working Group 2 recommended the Committee to:

- continue to support civil-society groups in the Region in building overall capacity;
- support civil-society organizations in building the capacity required to ensure social procurement;
- develop a checklist of what civil-society organizations should ask for during the development of transition plans (the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) fact sheets with local examples of social contracting for HIV could provide inspiration);
- revise the draft RCC-TB fact sheet on social contracting to, inter alia:
  - define the difference between social contracting and grants;
  - define the principles of social contracting within the framework of the TB Action Plan 2016–2020 (5) and UNAIDS treatment target 90-90-90 (8);
  - add an example of non-compliance, including reference to the difficulties of financing;
- support the development of a monitoring and evaluation methodology through an inclusive process involving all stakeholders, in accordance with current standards;
- facilitate the sharing of experiences and good practices in social contracting across countries.

### **Working Group 3: new anti-TB drugs and anti-retroviral treatment**

Based on discussions about how RCC-TB could support the introduction of new and repurposed anti-TB drugs in the WHO European Region, Working Group 3 identified the following barriers to introducing new anti-TB drugs and regimens:

- lack of government commitment;
- lack of guidelines on new drugs;
- lack of availability of new drugs due to affordability and manufacturing policies;
- problems related to procurement and funding;
- problems related to laboratory infrastructure;
- challenges related to pharmacovigilance;
- lack of psychosocial support in ensuring adherence to treatment;
- challenges related to introducing new drugs in breakaway territories, including prisons, and among vulnerable groups; and
- lack of patient awareness about new drugs.

The Committee’s primary strength in addressing and overcoming barriers to introducing new drugs is advocacy at both the higher and grassroots levels. In this connection, Working Group 3 recommended:

- developing country-specific talking points/briefs/fact sheets on the introduction of new anti-TB drugs and drug regimens;
- bringing up the topic of new anti-TB drugs and drug regimens at TB-related events;
- making use of country coordinating mechanisms and projects of the Global fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) as platforms for advocating new drugs;



- through advocacy, continuing to pressure drug manufactures into making new drugs available;
- advocating the WHO procurement quality and essential medicine lists (9) and the potential savings to be made from introducing new drugs.

RCC-TB plays an important role as a coordination platform for sharing experiences and good practices in introducing new drugs across countries and disseminating new WHO guidelines.

## Action points for RCC-TB

Based on plenary and working-group discussions, it was agreed that RCC-TB would:

- continue, on a monthly basis, to invite all members to join in discussions on:
  - GFATM regional grants (status update);
  - updating policy;
  - the timing of future meetings and opportunities for synergies;
  - the pricing and introduction of new drugs;
- continue to disseminate and promote the active use of the TB factsheets developed by RCC-TB;
- look into producing:
  - talking points/briefs on the introduction of new anti-TB drugs and drug regimens;
  - one-page country-specific briefing documents on key issues in the area of TB for use by the Regional Director in meetings with high-level representatives;
  - a checklist of what to request from civil society during the development of transition plans;
  - a revised draft fact sheet on social contracting;
  - a compendium of lessons learnt from the latest three ministerial conferences relevant to TB;
  - a calendar of the opportunities available up to the ministerial conference on communicable diseases, which is planned to take place under the Slovakian EU Presidency in autumn 2016;
- establish a working group to prepare for the ministerial conference on communicable diseases in Slovakia in autumn 2016 (including representatives of AIDS Action Europe, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), the European Commission, GFATM, the Stop-TB Partnership, the TB Europe Coalition, UNAIDS and the WHO Regional Office for Europe);
- continue to collect and share good practices in the prevention, treatment and care of TB, and encourage and support other stakeholders in generating them.

## Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of RCC-TB

Ms Fanny Voitzwinkler, European Policy and Advocacy Manager, Global Health Advocates, was re-elected as Chairperson of RCC-TB for a third and final term. Dr Evan Lee, Vice-President, Global Health Programmes and Access, Eli Lilly, and Dr

Timo Ulrichs, Vice President, Koch-Metschnikow Forum, were re-elected as Vice-Chairpersons.

## **Closing remarks**

Dr Masoud Dara and Ms Fanny Voitzwinkler thanked the participants for their participation in the workshop and for their continued contribution to RCC-TB and dedication to its mission. Important progress had been made during the course of the meeting, which will provide a solid foundation for the forthcoming activities of RCC-TB and its contribution to ending TB in Europe.

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8. 90–90–90 – An ambitious treatment target to help end the AIDS epidemic. Geneva: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS); 2014 (<http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2014/90-90-90>).

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<sup>1</sup> All URLs accessed 17 December 2015.

9. WHO Model Lists of Essential Medicines. In: Essential medicines and health products [website]. Geneva: WHO; 2015  
(<http://www.who.int/medicines/publications/essentialmedicines/en/>).

## Annex 1. Programme

09:00–09:10	Opening remarks	Dr Masoud Dara, Senior Adviser, Office of WHO at European Union and Programme Manager, a.i., Tuberculosis and M/XDR–TB Programme; Ms Fanny Voitzwinkler, Chairperson, RCC-TB
09:10–09:25	Introduction of participants	
09:25–09:30	WHO TB advocacy video	
09:30–09:45	Presentation of TB Regional Project (TB-REP): How is the project to address main TB challenges in the WHO European Region and synergy potential with RCC-TB	Dr Martin van den Boom, Technical Officer, Joint TB and HIV Programme; Ms Evgenia Heliukh, TBAIDS Alliance
09:45–10:00	Regional Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) Platform for Communities, Rights and Gender: ways of collaboration	Ms Nonna Turusbekova, TB Europe Coalition
10:00–10:15	Discussion	
10:15–10:45	Coffee break	
10:45–11:15	Increased political commitment for sustainability of financing for HIV and TB programmes in the WHO European Region <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Follow up from Riga (Stop TB Partnership/TB Europe Coalition (TBEC))</li><li>• Follow up from Georgia (European Harm Reduction Network)</li><li>• Follow up from Rome (European Aids Treatment Group/UNAIDS)</li><li>• Future opportunities (Chair and secretariat)</li></ul>	Chair
11:15–11:30	Discussion	
11:30–11:45	Introduction to group work	Ms Fanny Voitzwinkler and Dr Martin van den Boom

11:45–12:45	<u>Group work</u> Group 1: Sustainability and transition: next steps for RCC-TB and political advocacy in the “run-up” to the 2016 Slovak EU Presidency Group 2: Community and civil society involvement in TB and HIV programmes in the WHO European Region: ways forward in times of transition and social contracting Group 3: RCC-TB contribution to new TB drug introduction and anti-retroviral treatment (ART): low and higher burden contexts	All (see Working Group briefings)
12:45–13:45	Lunch	
13:45–14:30	Working groups (continued)	All
14:30-15:30	Plenary feedback (20 minutes per group)	
15:30-16:00	Discussion: Next steps and action points	Ms Fanny Voitzwinkler, Dr Martin van den Boom
16:00-16:30	Coffee break	
16:30-16:45	Election of new chair	Ms Fanny Voitzwinkler, Dr Martin van den Boom
16:45–17:00	How to institutionalize the constant exchange of good practices in TB prevention and care, partners’ examples from migration	Chair and Secretariat
17:00–17:10	Administrative issues and communication	Chair and Secretariat
17:10-17:20	Conclusions and closure	Dr Nedret Emiroğlu and Dr Masoud Dara

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