

Technical Advisory Group on Tuberculosis for the WHO European Region

**Report of the Twelfth Meeting
19–20 February 2018 Copenhagen, Denmark**



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Abstract

The Twelfth Meeting of the European Technical Advisory Group on Tuberculosis was held in Copenhagen on 19–20 February 2018. The objectives of the Meeting were to: (i) review the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the Seventeenth Meeting of the Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for Tuberculosis and the Eleventh Meeting of the Technical Advisory Group on Tuberculosis; (ii) review the status of implementation of the Tuberculosis Action Plan for the WHO European Region 2016–2020; (iii) advise on measures to take to support Member States to achieve more impact against TB through a sustainable development approach; and (iv) advise on steps needed to build on political commitment from the Moscow Ministerial Conference to the United Nations General Assembly high-level meeting on tuberculosis.

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Abbreviations

HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
MDR-TB	multidrug-resistant tuberculosis
TAG-TB	Technical Advisory Group on Tuberculosis
TB	tuberculosis
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
XDR-TB	extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis

Introduction

The Twelfth Meeting of the European Technical Advisory Group on Tuberculosis (TAG-TB) was held in Copenhagen, Denmark, on 19–20 February 2018.

The overall objective of TAG-TB is to provide an independent review and expert technical opinion regarding tuberculosis (TB), drug-resistant TB and HIV-associated TB to the WHO Regional Director for Europe.

The specific objectives of the Meeting were to:

- review the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the Seventeenth Meeting of the Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for Tuberculosis and the Eleventh Meeting of TAG-TB (13–14 February 2017);
- review the status of implementation of the Tuberculosis Action Plan for the WHO European Region 2016–2020;
- advise on measures to support Member States to improve TB prevention and care through a sustainable development approach; and
- advise on steps to build on the political commitment from Moscow Ministerial Conference to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) high-level meeting on TB in September 2018.

The scope and purpose, programme, and list of participants of the Meeting can be found in Annexes 1–3. The Meeting was chaired by Professor Alberto Matteelli.

TAG-TB congratulated the WHO Regional Office for Europe and Member States of the Region on their achievements over the last year. The substantial actions taken by the Regional Office and consequently by Member States have had significant results: TB incidence rates are decreasing across many countries. However, challenges remain: the proportion of multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) cases is increasing, numbers of TB/HIV coinfection cases are rising and challenges remain in reforming the health care systems towards ambulatory TB care. These trends all need to be addressed.

The UNGA high-level meeting on TB in September 2018 will support the Regional strategy for effective intersectoral actions and to leave no one behind in ending TB. TAG-TB congratulates the Regional Office for organizing this event.

Recommendations

This section lists the main recommendations of TAG-TB including, where relevant, for reports to be produced for presentation at the Thirteenth TAG-TB Meeting in 2019.

Overall WHO Regional Office for Europe work on TB and M- and XDR-TB

1. Continue discussions with recipient countries of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria on the transition to domestic financing mechanisms for TB detection, treatment and care. Together with the Member States, analyse and highlight areas at risk of suffering a funding gap after 2020, and discuss future actions with the Member States and the Global Fund.
Product: an internal report.
2. Collect and share the best case studies of MDR-TB prevention and care at the national level (possibly from Kazakhstan, Latvia and Lithuania), including the effectiveness and safety of transitioning from hospital-based to ambulatory-based care for extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB) and MDR-TB patients. Ideally, a description of drug resistance patterns in XDR-TB strains to be included.
Product: WHO Regional Office for Europe publication.
3. Continue implementing the European Respiratory Society/WHO TB e-Consilium and encourage Member States to complement and strengthen this with national and subnational committees/consiliums for managing X- and MDR-TB. National committees/consiliums to ideally use electronic platforms for communication, with support from the Regional Office.
Product: internal report, to be presented at the Thirteenth TAG-TB Meeting.
4. WHO has just published the global policy document on isoniazid resistance and use of fluoroquinolones, WHO treatment guidelines for isoniazid-resistant tuberculosis. An expert panel (including the regional Green Light Committee) is to be convened to determine whether the Regional Office is to follow the global recommendation. To provide relevant information for the panel, the Regional Office to analyse drug-resistance patterns in selected high-priority countries, paying special attention to isoniazid resistance by mutation type and quinolone resistance.
Product: an expert panel report.
5. Develop a set of minimum standards for palliative care (including psychosocial and educational support) for XDR-TB patients and include palliative care as a discussion topic in the Thirteenth TAG-TB Meeting in 2019.
Product: an internal report.

Adopting a sustainable, intersectoral approach to combat TB

6. Promote the strategy to combat TB at both country and regional levels using an intersectoral approach by encouraging the use of existing mechanisms and platforms (e.g. national strategic plans, country coordinating mechanisms, United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks) and to support WHO country officers to work with government ministers to encourage intersectoral collaboration.
7. Support national TB prevention and care programmes to work with ministries beyond the health ministry (e.g. Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Finance) and encourage Member States to update national TB action plans to include intersectoral actions and sustainable development.
8. Work with Member States to embed TB prevention and care into a model that encourages adoption of a whole-of-government approach to tackle the wider social determinants of TB by bringing together stakeholders from health and non-health backgrounds.
9. Support Member States in empowering front-line staff in the health sector and beyond (e.g. doctors, TB nurses, social workers, TB support workers and police) to pursue a more people-centred model of

care and to actively mediate the interface between health care services and patients to build trust within communities.

Promoting political commitment and accountability for TB prevention and care

TAG-TB recommends the following actions to ensure the 2018 UNGA high-level meeting on TB builds on the level of political commitment achieved at the Moscow Ministerial Conference.

10. Together with partners, advocate for high-level political representation beyond the ministries of health, as well as representation from civil society organizations, in country delegations to the upcoming UNGA meeting, paying special attention to high-priority countries.
11. Support Member States (especially high-priority countries) in packaging country-specific advocacy material for non-health sector stakeholders/ministers prior to the UNGA meeting. This could include:
 - a brief factsheet/infographic for non-health sector stakeholders covering the core facts on TB and the benefits of investing in TB (e.g. \$ 1 spent leads to \$ 43 saved, as reported at the Moscow Ministerial Conference);
 - a brief factsheet/infographic illustrating the wider social determinants of TB;
 - an overview of the core actions needed to end TB in the country; and
 - an updated country profile.
12. Advocate for the global accountability framework to include the monitoring of political commitment and social indicators, as well as epidemiological indicators.
13. Together with high-priority countries, develop a strategy/action/follow-up plan for implementation after the UNGA, using existing platforms and frameworks.

Procedural recommendations for TAG-TB meetings

14. Recommendations made at the Eleventh Meeting of TAG-TB which have not yet been achieved to be carried forward and reported on at next TAG-TB meeting (including recommendations on access to second-line drugs, national barriers and the adoption of short treatment regimens).
15. More specific progress reports on TAG-TB recommendations to include descriptions of inputs, output/products and possible outcomes (if any). A progress report on recommendations from the Eleventh Meeting of TAG-TB in 2017 to be shared with TAG-TB members two months after the Twelfth Meeting of TAG-TB.
16. Presentations and other relevant materials to be provided to members two weeks before the Thirteenth Meeting of TAG-TB.
17. A midterm virtual TAG-TB meeting (by video) to be arranged to evaluate the implementation status of the latest TAG-TB recommendations.

Annex 1. Scope and purpose

Main objective

To provide independent review and expert technical opinion in prevention and care of TB, drug-resistant TB and HIV-associated TB to the Director of the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

Specific objectives

The specific objectives of the Twelfth Meeting of TAG-TB were to:

1. review the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the Seventeenth Meeting of the Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for Tuberculosis and the Eleventh Meeting of TAG-TB;
2. review the status of implementation of the Tuberculosis Action Plan for the WHO European Region, 2016–2020;
3. advise on measures to take to support Member States to achieve higher impact on TB through a sustainable development approach; and
4. advise on the steps to take to build on political commitment from Moscow Ministerial Conference to UNGA high-level meeting on TB

Annex 2. Programme

Day 1. 19 February 2018

SESSION 1	Introduction
10:00–10:10	Opening <i>Nedret Emiroğlu, Director, Division of Health Emergencies and Communicable Diseases (DEC)</i>
10:10–10:25	Review of the terms of reference and membership of TAG-TB; review of the declarations of conflict of interest, election of vice-chair of TAG-TB <i>Masoud Dara, Coordinator, Communicable Diseases & Programme Manager, Joint Tuberculosis, HIV & viral Hepatitis (JTH)</i>
SESSION 2	Updates
10:25–10:45	Summary of the recommendations from the 17 th Meeting of the Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for TB (STAG-TB), Geneva, 12–14 June 2017, and of the Global Ministerial Conference on Ending TB in the Sustainable Development Era, Moscow, 16–17 November 2017 <i>Irina A. Vasilyeva, Member of STAG-TB and Chief TB Specialist of the Ministry of Health, Moscow, Russian Federation</i>
10:45–11:05	Update on implementation of the Tuberculosis Action Plan for the WHO European Region, 2016-2020 <i>Martin van den Boom, Technical Officer, JTH</i>
11:05–11:30	Questions and answers, discussion
11:30–11:50	Progress in the implementation of the recommendations from the 11th Meeting of TAG-TB, Copenhagen, 13-14 February 2017 <i>Martin van den Boom</i>
11:50–12:10	Overview of the TB epidemiology in the WHO European Region <i>Ms Annemarie Rinder-Stengaard</i>
12:10–12:35	Discussion
12:35–12:45	Group photo
SESSION 3	Specific questions to TAG-TB
14:00–14:45	Achieving higher impact on TB prevention and care in the WHO European Region in the era of SDGs and through a sustainable development approach <i>Presenter: Vittoria Gemelli</i> <i>Discussant: Sarah R. Anderson, TAG-TB</i>
15:15– 16:15	Discussion
16:15–16:45	Wrap-up and closure of the day

DAY 2. 20 February 2018

- 09:00–09:30 Steps to take to build on political commitment from Moscow Ministerial Conference to UNGA high level meeting on TB
Presenter: Masoud Dara
Discussant: Alberto Matteelli, TAG-TB
- 09:30–10:30 Discussion
- 10:50–12:50 Discussion on the main recommendations of the TAG-TB 12th Meeting
- 12:50–13:00 Closure of the TAG-TB Twelfth Meeting
Masoud Dara
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